

WYCLIFFE COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 1761 02875 7888



*Stacks*

LIBRARY

**Wycliffe College**

TORONTO

*Stacks*

Shelf No. BV4253. Se 4

Register No. 16173

January 6 1936









THE SERVANT OF GOD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ASPECTS OF CHRIST

*Crown 8vo, cloth, 6/-*

---

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON



THE  
SERVANT OF GOD

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

W. B. SELBIE, M.A.

PRINCIPAL OF MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

ST. PAUL'S HOUSE, WARWICK SQUARE

LONDON, E.C. MCMXI

45205651 ✓

*Printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.*



## INTRODUCTION

THE Sermons comprising this volume were preached at different times and to different congregations, but they have a certain unity both of subject and aim. The only excuse that can be given for their publication is that they attempt to deal in a simple and positive fashion with certain aspects of Christian truth that are in some danger of being obscured.

Christianity has an experimental as well as a theological side, and great themes like the Incarnation and Atonement and the new life in Christ belong to the pulpit as well as to the class-room. If the pulpit is to retain its power it must neither shelve subjects like these, nor resolve them into mere speculation, but set them forth boldly in their historic significance and present-day power. There is abundant room for

growth and variation in the forms and language in which the message may be conveyed. But the message itself, the Gospel of a Divine, Redeeming, Indwelling Christ, must not be blurred or eviscerated of its real content in the interests of any theory or of any time-spirit. After all, the fundamental needs of human nature do not greatly change. Temptation and sin, sorrow and death, are still what they have always been, and the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ, if it ever saved from such things, will save again if it is but set forth in the way that men can understand and accept. Neither criticism nor speculation can ever take the place of the word of power and hope in the business of saving souls. The writer of this book, with the experience of twenty years' preaching behind him, is fully persuaded of this and is glad to recognise that the need is being felt in quarters where it has not always been apparent.

The editor of a newspaper devoted to the interests of what is known as Liberal Christianity recently wrote: "Liberal Christianity has not failed; it is simply in



process of change, like everything else in a moving world. It has discovered that some of the problems of the Gospel history have their roots in spiritual mysteries which still elude our analysis. It finds less satisfaction than men once did in gazing at a perfect example of goodness, a vision of static perfection in the past. It recognises that the cry of the human soul is for a dynamic religion." This is an admission with which the writer has the utmost sympathy. He believes that if Liberal and Evangelical Christians could join hands in the effort to meet this cry of the human soul, a new day of power would dawn for the Christian Church. It is in the hope that the sermons in this volume may serve as a small contribution towards this end that he sends them forth. And in doing so he wishes to thank his friends Dr. T. R. Glover and Dr. G. Buchanan Gray for some valuable criticisms and suggestions.

W. B. S.

MANSFIELD COLLEGE,  
*December 1910.*





# CONTENTS

## I

BEHOLD, MY SERVANT . . .	PAGE 3
--------------------------	-----------

Isaiah lii. 13-15.

## II

DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN .	25
--------------------------------	----

Isaiah liii. 1-3.

## III

WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED .	47
----------------------------------	----

Isaiah liii. 4-6.

## IV

OPPRESSED AND AFFLICTED . . .	71
-------------------------------	----

Isaiah liii. 7-9.

## V

HE SHALL DIVIDE THE SPOIL . . .	PAGE 91
Isaiah liii. 10-12.	

## VI

RECONCILIATION IN CHRIST . . .	113
2 Cor. v. 19.	

## VII

HE MUST NEEDS SUFFER . . .	135
Luke xxiv. 26.	

## VIII

CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS . . .	157
1 Cor. xv. 3.	

## IX

GLORYING IN THE CROSS . . .	179
Gal. vi. 14.	

# CONTENTS

xi

## X

	PAGE
MADE UNTO US REDEMPTION . . .	201

1 Cor. i. 30.

## XI

THE LORD'S SERVANT SHALL NOT STRIVE . . . . .	223
--	-----

Matt. xii. 19, 20.

## XII

THE MINISTERING CHRIST . . . .	241
--------------------------------	-----

John xiii. 13, 14.

## XIII

THE BLESSING OF THE HUNGRY SOUL .	261
-----------------------------------	-----

Matt. v. 6.

## XIV

FOLLOWING CHRIST . . . . .	281
----------------------------	-----

Luke v. 27.





BEHOLD, MY SERVANT

Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Like as many as were astonished at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men), so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.—ISAIAH lii. 13-15 (R.V.).

# I

## BEHOLD, MY SERVANT

THE passage which begins with these words has been called the Calvary of the Old Testament. It is indeed a holy of holies, and almost too sacred for comment or criticism. But love for it need not make us blind, and we do no honour to any Scripture by refusing to investigate it, simply because it deals with the most sacred mysteries of our faith. It is to be feared that such false reverence as this is responsible for much misunderstanding and misinterpretation of God's Word.

The passage from the 13th verse of chapter lii. to the end of chapter liii. stands by itself and is really a poem—what Browning would have called a dramatic lyric. Its subject is the suffering Servant of the Lord, and it stands closely related to other poems

by this great prophet of the Exile concerning this same Servant of the Lord. To all of these it gives the crown and finishing touch. Who this Servant of the Lord is, or what the picture of him in the mind of the prophet represents, is one of the problems of Biblical theology. There are many points in regard to it on which we have to wait for further light, but this much we may take for certain, that the idea in the prophet's mind of the Servant of the Lord, like so many other Biblical ideas, was one which underwent a process of development, and that in the poem we are now considering we have its last and highest stage. There can be no doubt also that when he first uses the name "My Servant" the prophet is thinking mainly of the people of God—Israel, or the righteous remnant of Israel—and depicting their needs and sorrows and joys. But as his thought proceeds the personification becomes more complete, until it culminates in this great passage which deals with the people of God as with a single Person, who still remains, however, typical and representative of the people of Israel—a point which is



extremely important for the right interpretation of the passage as a whole. Of course it is most difficult for us to divest ourselves of the Christian atmosphere in dealing with it. In the light of what afterwards happened it all seems so simple and easy.

But if we can at all succeed in looking at it as though we had never heard of Jesus Christ, in transporting ourselves to the standpoint of the ancient Jew, two points will become very apparent. The first is the indistinct and shadowy character of the picture itself. The Servant of the Lord is there, and we hear what men say about Him. But little is said of Him directly, and we have to feel after Him through the impressions of others and we know His sufferings by means of the shadow of grief and horror they have cast upon their hearts. In fact the picture is a mere outline, which would mean little to us apart from the "filling up" which later history has supplied.

And the second thing we note is the contrast between this Servant of the Lord and the other familiar portraits of the Messiah drawn in the Old Testament. We have

here surely the work of the Spirit of God through the conscience of one who is among the sanest and most spiritual of His prophets. As we read between the lines and trace the growth of the great idea we can almost feel the resistance of the prophet's own mind to the strange new light which is dawning upon him. We are sure that he only reached the height on which he stands by dint of hard struggle and real self-suppression. But we know that in the end there was revealed to him something of the strange process of discipline and sacrifice by which God should purify His people in the coming time, and carry on to perfection the revealing and redeeming task which He had begun in them. Before the mind and conscience of the prophet there hovered in dim outline the figure of one who should bear this burden of sacrifice, the Servant of God and man, great in his humiliation and in his exaltation alike, the chosen and destined instrument by whom God's purpose should be fulfilled and His kingdom come.

With true poetic licence, and with that fondness for dramatising which distinguishes

all his work, the prophet first introduces to us Jehovah Himself, who proclaims the coming of His Servant, and describes His work. He then transports himself into the future, to the time when the prophecy has been fulfilled, and we see the people looking back at the Servant of God, describing His sufferings and death and pouring out their confession, their adoration, their triumphant joy. It is this touch which brings his words home so penetratingly to us. There is one grand historic figure whom these words recall. As they were written not by imagination merely but by conscience, so it is to conscience that they appeal. That they have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ, and that even with curious correspondence of detail, no one now denies. But their fulfilment is something more than a coincidence or an historical curiosity. How far the prophet was working in the dark, as it is sometimes called, we can never tell, but there is enough light for us to see by. We know that at the back of all he wrote there lie principles which are the principles of God's working always and

everywhere, and an appeal to conscience that is universal in its power. We do him therefore no injustice when we use his words to aid us in more closely understanding Him in whom they were fulfilled, and it is with that aim they should be studied.

The poem is divided into five strophes, represented by paragraphs in the Revised Version. It is the first of these with which we deal now and in which we hear Jehovah speaking in vindication of His servant and in explanation of His work. We might paraphrase the words in some such way as this : It is quite true that my Servant has suffered, but for all that He will not fail, He will prosper and be greatly lifted up. His very humiliation surprises men and attracts their attention, and the multitude find their astonishment turned into reverence and their perplexity into new, deeper, and truer thought, "for that which was not told them they see, and that which they have heard not they have to consider."

Here in brief is the general theme of the whole passage, and we may gather from it one or two main considerations as follows :



1. The first of these is the personality of the Servant Himself. He is regarded not as a passive agent in the hands of God or of destiny, but as an efficient and active force, with the full initiative of a Person. And this is not the least remarkable of all those anticipations of the future which the prophecy contains. At the very least it means that the fulfilment of God's Redemptive purpose will come about, not by means of a new law or revelation or covenant, but through a Person who is Himself equal to the great task, and who in some fashion more or less inexplicable is representative of the whole people of God. In other words it is a foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Word made flesh. And this ancient appeal of the prophet contains a truth which is deeply needed by the men of to-day.

The Incarnation is to us the guarantee of the Divine personality. Until we know God as a Person we do not really know Him at all. To regard Him as a law, a tendency, a moral impulse, a spiritual force, is to lose ourselves in mists of vain speculation. Even

in this world the highest and most substantial objects of our knowledge are persons. As Pascal says, "If the entire physical Universe conspired to crush a man, the man would still be nobler than the entire physical universe, for he would *know* that he was crushed." It is this personal self-consciousness which makes our human nature infinitely great, and we must find this raised to its highest power in God, if He is to become the object of our worship or win us to Himself. And apart from the revelation in Jesus Christ we have no sure knowledge of God as any other than an impersonal force. The truths of Christianity are great and striking and its doctrines are interesting historical documents, but behind them all, as that which has given to them their power and vitality, is the Person of Jesus Christ:

The Word had breath, and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds  
In loveliness of perfect deeds  
More strong than all poetic thought.

It matters not what intellectual expression may be found for Christian thought and experience, or however various may be the

forms in which this appears—in the long run Christians all come back to the same shrine and all rest upon the same foundation, which is Jesus Christ. And so, read in the speech of to-day, the message of the prophet to God's people in the hour of their need is a message for all time. They out of the darkness of their captivity were looking for the fulfilment of God's promises and for the restoration and reform of His people. They sought a fresh covenant, a more binding law, a new Jerusalem, a Theocracy established in men's hearts. But the prophet, with a deeper insight and a truer instinct and inspiration, had to tell them of other things than these. His first thought was of a deliverer, one who could stand between the people and their sins, and bear the burden of their age-long forgetfulness of God. They looked at the end, he rather at the means; and so he spoke to them words of suffering and sacrifice and service, as the only way which would lead to that victory of which they dreamed, and to that purification which their souls desired.

Much the same has to be said to an age like

ours. We too look for God's Kingdom to come on earth, for larger opportunities and bettered conditions and a brighter lot for the sons of men. We too know something of a bondage that is none the less real that it is not always material, and we long for the liberty of the people of God. And we too are directed, not to any new social programme or scheme of betterment, but to a Deliverer, to one who shall save His people from their sins. We cannot really tell what the prophet had in his mind when he cried,<sup>1</sup> "Behold, My Servant Israel shall be exalted, He shall be lifted up and be very high," but we know this—that the place which the Person of Jesus Christ holds in the thought and experience of Christendom to-day implies an exaltation far above all that the prophet can have dreamed of. And our modern revolt against the merely dogmatic

<sup>1</sup> The translations in the text, except where otherwise indicated, are those of Prof. Peake in his book "The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament." The word "Israel" here is due to an emendation of Prof. Peake, and is consistent with his view of the Servant as standing for the people throughout—a view which the writer does not altogether share.



interpretation of Christianity, so far as it is not negative and destructive, means a reassertion of man's need not only for light and knowledge about God, but for personal contact with God Himself. It is the Person of Christ and nothing else which has given life and actuality both to Christian belief and to the God on whom Christians have believed. It is the force inseparable from a great Personality, the witness of a loving heart as well as an omniscient mind, which gives the shattering and quickening effect to the words of Jesus Christ, and which causes His teaching and work to shine forth through the mist of the dead languages in which it is shrouded as the means of eternal life for the men of to-day. And it is the Person of Jesus Christ evidenced to men in the reality of their own experience, and not merely as some distant memory, that still awakens their enthusiasm as nothing else has power to do.

It is here that we find the universal note of our religion. Were Christianity but a new philosophy or a rule of life, or a system of Divine decrees, it must have

remained provincial and defined. But where it bursts all bonds of race and class and speech and clime, is that it points men to a living, loving Person, bids them hear the voice of Christ Himself saying :

Oh heart I made, a heart beats here,  
Face my hands fashioned see it in Myself.

The appeal, that is to say, is to facts and to experience. And it is here that Christianity obtains its hold on the simplest and most unsophisticated natures, and on the souls most deeply stained with sin. It does not talk theology to them, or wring their hearts with a dread tale of law, but tells them of One who lived and loved and suffered and died, and who in the midst of it all is highly exalted and mighty to save, and quick to pity and sympathise. And there is something there that wins them, touches the springs of a new impulse, wakens love and devotion, and clothes in the armour of new and unsuspected strength. In this suffering Servant of God they see one whose glory puts them to shame, and whose pity fires them with hope, for

Subtlest thought shall fail and learning falter,  
Churches change, fanes perish, systems go,  
But our human needs they will not alter,  
*Christ* no after-age shall e'er outgrow.

Yea, Amen ! O changeless One, Thou only  
Art Life's guide and spiritual goal,  
Thou the light across the dark vale lonely,  
Thou the eternal haven of the soul.

2. In these first few lines of the passage on the Suffering Servant we have, as already indicated, the general theme introduced. First the Servant Himself is held up before us in His Personal exaltation, and then we are told that His exaltation is by suffering and sacrifice. In contrast to all human experience the utter humiliation of this Servant of the Lord before men would have a practical issue, and His sacrifice would lead to His uplifting. And so we have yet to consider this practical character and outcome of the Servant's sufferings : " whose visage was so marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men." It almost seems as though the prophet were offering some apology for this idea of a Suffering Messiah. It was an idea utterly

repugnant to the Jews, and although Jewish commentators in the Middle Ages so far laid aside their prejudice as to confess that this passage does certainly point to one who shall be exalted through suffering, at the time it was written and right down till long after the day of Christ, the whole conception was scorned and rejected by those for whose teaching it was intended. We need not be surprised at this, for the same treatment has been liberally dealt out to it even by Christians. We shall have much to say about the sufferings of Christ before we have done with this prophecy; for the present the main points to keep before us are practically these—that the coming Servant of God must needs suffer, that his discipline and sacrifice were necessary to what he had to do, that though his sufferings were of a kind to startle and amaze the children of men, yet they were part of the process of his lifting up, and that through them men would be brought to see and understand what otherwise would be difficult if not altogether inexplicable.

The fact that Jesus Christ suffered gives

all its strength and grip to His Gospel and shows us the reason why it still holds and sways the lives of men. Just as a harp's strings must be stretched to the breaking-point before it can give out its full music, so suffering puts a new song into men's lips and a new harmony into their lives, and without it all their best music is the crackling of thorns under a pot. This is a truth men do not like to face, and they put it from them as long as they can. A pleasure-loving age can see no beauty in a religion that deals so much with sin. Men think that God sent people into the world to enjoy themselves; they say, with a modern writer, "You enter into the ideas of the Eternal through laughter and not through tears," "Nothing is really serious at the bottom," "Contentment can only be gained by gaiety of heart." Or they complain, with a modern poet, that they are not as the animals are, who "never lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins," and who never have "to worry about their state and their duties to God."

Of course if men are content to be as the



animals they may hold such views as these. But not even the most airy cynicism can wholly hide the dread secret of our sorrows, the deep sad moan of our humanity. When Marie Bashkirtseff was told she had consumption, she bade the doctors blister her chest as they liked, but said she could put on pretty bodices with lace and flowers to hide the ugly marks; and she went on singing, dancing, flirting and amusing herself to the end, trying to ignore the deadly thing that was killing her. And is not that temper far too common to-day? We have only to have it brought to our notice to see how hollow it is. We know that it can never help us in the hour of our need. To most of us life is not all sunshine and merry-making. Pain is real enough and sin no less real, suffering comes and we cannot evade it, and death has meant to most a world of aching desires and burning regrets—a veritable valley of the shadow. And a religion which does not fairly and frankly face these hard facts is no religion for us.

We may not agree with all the various forms



in which men have described and accounted for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Much of what has been taught about it, though true and real in substance, is antiquated in form and needs to be restated in terms more suited to the present day. But that does not affect for a single moment the main point, which is, that men "have joy through His sorrow and life through His death." We know from common human experience that there is no real sympathy with suffering save in the breasts of those who have themselves suffered. In the school of pain men learn lessons that can be taught them nowhere else. And we can hardly conceive a Saviour who could be equal to our deepest need unless He were also one who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And when we take sin into account the same thing appears more clearly. We may dupe and deceive ourselves for a time, but it thrusts itself upon our attention, and the consciousness of it cannot be gainsaid. Because it is the burden of our life therefore it was the burden of Christ's. He had to face it if ever He was to become the Re-

deemer of the world, and it was no light and easy task. He can speak to the soul in the anguish of penitence as no other can, because He has Himself done battle with the enemy, and faced the worst that evil can do and come out in the end victorious.

We must not overlook the representative character of the Suffering Servant as portrayed by the prophet of old. He did not stand for Himself merely, but for the people of God. And so the office of Jesus Christ is above all representative. He is the Son of Man. He stands in an unique relation to the great body of humanity, He is profoundly influenced by the needs, the sufferings, the sins of the race. And when men come to look for the source of His power and ask themselves for the secret of His rule, they find it not in the wisdom of His teaching, the beauty of His character, the timeliness of His appearance, but in the mystery of His Cross. Controversy may rage about the exact method and meaning of it all, but there is little or no difference of opinion as to the result. The Cross is the means of the salvation which He brings,

the source of His influence and the secret of His power.

And yet the prophet was right in indicating that it would also be the ground of His rejection. It takes long for men to get over the stumbling-block of the Cross, and it somewhat depends on what manner of men they are whether they will ever do so. Without pressing the words unduly, there is perhaps more than one sarcastic hint of this in the passage before us. Certainly those who most readily receive and appreciate the work of the Lowly and Despised Redeemer are not found in kings' houses or in the palaces of the great, the proud, the rich, and the self-satisfied. Men must have something in common with the suffering Christ before they can understand the full extent of His claim upon them. They need to go down into the valley of humiliation, to mourn because of sin, to wrestle with doubts and fears, to know what it is to wait long and patiently for God, and then they will be prepared to know something of the peace and comfort of Christ's Cross. This is why He speaks

so alluringly to the sinful, the penitent and to the poor in spirit—that they and He have a secret in common which none but such as they can share. We should be glad to know this, for the time comes to all of us when we are stricken down from our pride and self-sufficiency, and then there is balm in the words of Christ and great joy in His sorrow. “For what was not told them they see, and what they did not hear they consider.”

**DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN**



Who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ? For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised, and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief : and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not.—ISAIAH liii. 1-3 (R.V.).

## II

### DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN

THE scene in the poem changes with the beginning of chapter liii. The speakers now are not Jehovah or the prophet himself, but the penitent people of Israel. They are regarded as looking back in bitter contrition of heart on the life of God's Servant and realising how fatally he was misunderstood while in their midst. He came and preached to them, but, they cry, who believed that which we heard, and how was it possible to see in this man, this root out of a dry ground, that the Lord's arm had been bared, that He had visited His people and made known His purposes? There was nothing comely about His mien, nothing attractive in His aspect. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of pains and familiar with ailing, and men covered their

## 26 DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN

faces from Him as they would from some loathsome leper by the wayside. It is the old error—they judged God's work by the standards of men, they looked for earthly greatness and material strength and prosperity, and when they saw only sacrifice and suffering and spiritual achievement they failed to recognise the worth of these things, and the Messiah Himself was despised and they esteemed Him not.

Now the more the matter is considered the more marvellous does it seem that a prophet, writing in the time of the exile, should ever have dared to draw a picture like this of the character of the Servant of God and of the reception that he meets with among his own people. We must remember that the picture is much worse than the somewhat weak translation in our Bibles makes it. The words sorrow and grief in the original refer to bodily pain and sickness, and, as we shall see later, the prophet practically conceives of the Servant of God as a leper, or at any rate says that he was so regarded and treated by his contemporaries. It is cer-

tainly the most remarkable evidence of his spiritual insight and foresight and of his freedom from all merely conventional ideas that he should have used such words as these, and used them when he did.

But all the same, the character of the picture he draws puts us on our guard. It helps us to grasp the principle we must follow in discussing the fulfilment of this prophecy in Jesus Christ. We cannot sufficiently wonder at it, but we must beware of exaggerating it and pressing it in detail. The anticipation here of the life and work of Jesus Christ is very striking, but it is a case of moral and spiritual identity and not of resemblance of external circumstances. When the prophet speaks of the Servant of God as a plague-stricken and physically afflicted being he is dowering Him with what Orientals regard as the worst of human calamities. But though Jesus Christ suffered, we cannot say that He suffered exactly in this way. He was the man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men, and He knew the meaning of pain, but He was certainly not so hideous with

## 28 DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN

bodily disease that men must needs cover their faces from Him as He passed by. With this caution we may go on to look at the life and work of Jesus in the light of these prophetic words.

1. "Who could have believed that which we have heard? But to whom was the arm of Yahweh revealed?" In this cry of doubt and astonishment, and almost of despair, we have exactly expressed the attitude of an unbelieving world towards Jesus Christ. The offence of Christ is not yet ceased, and men in the heyday of their strength, in the full tide of their pleasures, and in the strong conflict of life, find it difficult to believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has any practical relation to themselves. The grounds of their incredulity are very much those suggested in the passage before us. Here the people of God find it impossible to believe in the Servant of the Lord as the Messiah on account of the obscurity of his origin, and of the lowliness and even offensiveness of his mien. And translated into modern language these are still the difficulties which



centre round the problem of the Incarnation—the Divinity and the Humanity of our Lord.

“For He grew up as a sapling before Him, and as a root out of a dry ground.” He was a carpenter in an obscure little town in Palestine. He was not highly cultured or trained in the wisdom of men. There was nothing in His antecedents or surroundings which could account for His marvellous after-development. His earthly lot was hard and sordid, His mission was practically a fiasco, and He died the death of a common criminal. And yet He called Himself the Son of God and Son of Man, He made claims such as no earthly teacher has ever made before or since. His public instruction of a few short months, delivered mainly to peasant-folk and fishermen, has become one of the greatest intellectual and spiritual forces which the world has ever known. And, what is more striking still, He Himself stands out infinitely greater than the doctrines He taught. Ever since His day vast multitudes of the best and wisest as well as of the poorest and most

### 30 DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN

illiterate men have looked to Him as Divine, have found in Him strength to live, redemption from sin, peace with God, and hope for immortality. Even this present age, busy and practical as it is, cannot resist His fascination.

Among the problems which most occupy the minds of men to-day are problems which have to do with the work and Person of Jesus Christ. From whatever point of view we regard Him, this much we have to concede, that He is a spiritual force of the first magnitude, that He has produced results so vast and far-reaching as almost to defy computation, that He stands out from the page of history unique and incalculable. And such effects as these imply a cause sufficient to produce them. There must have been in Christ, or behind Christ, some power capable of doing the work. When we compare the Jesus of our Gospels, the work He did and the estimate in which He was held by His contemporaries, with the Christ of history and the position which He holds to-day, there is nothing unreasonable in the assumption of the Incarnation,

that He was God manifest in the flesh. No one can doubt that this is an assumption sufficient to account for the facts. The only question is whether any lesser assumption—any one involving fewer demands upon our faith—can do the same.

Now upon this point we ought to be by this time in a position to judge. From the early days of the Christian era until now, repeated attempts have been made to explain the life and work of Jesus Christ without admitting His divinity. They have been made, most of them, by good men, men who were intelligent and honest as well as acute, and who could bring to their aid vast learning and fascinating literary skill. And yet not one of these attempts has ever won and held the belief of any large number of men, and most of them have fallen to the ground still-born. As a modern writer says, "Each new naturalistic theory of the life of Christ has discredited and demolished its predecessors. And if any one of them is alive and finds credence to-day, it is only because it is the

latest, and it is but waiting for its successors (as the theory of Socinus waited for the theory of Strauss, and the theory of Strauss waited for the theory of Renan) to be its judge and destroyer."

And so it comes about that the modern successors of those whom the prophet saw in his mind's eye, who had not believed what they heard and to whom the Lord's arm was not bared, are driven to take the high *a priori* road. They refuse to believe that Jesus Christ is God, because they say we cannot know anything about Him, nor if He revealed Himself could we understand the revelation. To them the Incarnation is absurd and impossible, "a root out of a dry ground."

There is a striking passage in Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion* dealing with this aspect of the question. He says: "At one time it seemed to me impossible that any proposition verbally intelligible as such could be more violently absurd than that of the Incarnation. Now I see that this standpoint is wholly irrational. 'But (you say) the Incarnation is opposed to common

sense.' No doubt—utterly so: but so it ought to be if true. Common sense is merely a rough register of common experience. But the Incarnation, if ever it took place, whatever else it may have been, was not a common event. 'But it is derogatory to God to become man.' How do you know? Besides, Christ was not an ordinary man. Both negative criticism and the positive effects of His life prove this: while if we for a moment adopt the Christian point of view for the sake of argument, the whole *raison d'être* of mankind is bound up in Him. Lastly, there are considerations *per contra* rendering an Incarnation antecedently probable."

Thus we may come to see that the very reasons which caused men to reject Christ long ago, and which still cause them to look with suspicion on His claims, may, rightly regarded, be adduced as arguments for His Divinity. It is true that He was a root out of a dry ground, that there was nothing in His age or circumstances which could account for Him; yet that only makes it all the more wonderful that He



should have done so great a work. It is true that He was and is despised and rejected of men, that His sayings are often accounted hard and His doctrine unacceptable; but that only increases our reverence for His personality when we remember the influence He has exercised over the minds and hearts of men. All other miracles of Christianity fade into insignificance beside the supreme miracle of the Person of Jesus Christ. It is the most incalculable and unaccountable force in the world to-day. It is winning triumphs on every hand. What it is destined to do in the future it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. We can well afford to neglect the *a priori* argument, and to refuse to bandy words with those who tell us these things are impossible and incredible at this time of day, when we have such solid ground of fact on which to take our stand. Even by those who have stood aloof in the past, the old negative attitude is fast being abandoned. If they do not take Christ at His own valuation they exhaust every device to escape from saying that He was a mere man—they

cannot but confess that in Him the arm of the Lord has been revealed.

2. There is more than one reason given in this part of the prophet's poem for the rejection of the Servant of the Lord. It was not only that there was nothing in His surroundings or circumstances to testify to His regal position, but that He Himself was of an aspect so mean and lowly that men shrank from Him and never suspected who or what manner of Being He was. What they said was this: "He hath no form that we should look upon him, no visage that we should desire Him." We may allow for a certain poetic exaggeration in these words, and we need not press the allusions they contain to bodily deformity and sickness. Certainly there is nothing in what we know of the physical life of Jesus Christ to warrant the use of them by us. Nevertheless they have been fulfilled in Him, and that in a very curious way. Looking at them broadly, we can see that what they do chiefly is to testify to the full humanity of this Servant of God. He was no demi-

god or archangel, but a veritable Son of Man, one touched with the feeling of our infirmities, a man of pains and familiar with ailing. And just as the prophet's picture of suffering and ill was to be revolting and incredible to the people of God, so the thought of the full humanity of Jesus Christ has proved a more serious stumbling-block to Christians than the idea of His Divinity itself. By some strange mental process men seem to find it easier to believe that man could become God than that God could become man. As a rule we insist on reading more into the Gospel narratives than they actually contain. The picture they draw of Jesus is simple, natural, and human, in spite of the marvellous character of some of the details. But instead of accepting in good faith the references to His real humanity, we seek to evade them and explain them away. We lift Him on to a pedestal of our own manufacture and exaggerate all that is miraculous and divine in His character, until His humanity becomes a thing altogether phantasmal and unreal.

The process is amply illustrated both in Christian art and Christian theology. The early representations of Christ in Christian art, such as are found in the Catacombs or on tombstones or sarcophagi of the Christian dead, are beautifully naïve and human. True, the representation is often symbolic, and the symbolism is not unfrequently Pagan in its origin, but underneath it all there is clearly discernible the grand but simple figure of one who shared the burdens and the needs of our humanity. But as time went on all this was changed, and in the later Byzantine and Italian art the Christ is almost entirely divorced from the suggestions and occupations of human life. He is portrayed sometimes in dread and terrible guise as the judge and ruler of men, and if the picture be drawn from scenes of His earthly life there is the inevitable halo round His brows with all its suggestions of unreality. Exactly the same process has been followed in theology or Christian thought.

The early Fathers frankly accepted the Christ of the Gospels, and assumed that

the writers really meant what they said when they spoke of Jesus as growing in wisdom and stature and favour with God and man, as professing ignorance in the questions He asked, and as being really tempted, as really suffering and dying just as men suffer and die. But as time went on, and under the stress of more metaphysical conceptions of God and religious truth, these references to the real human nature of our Lord were regarded as offensive, and as needing to be explained away. The reality of His human life was held to detract somewhat from the splendour of His divine glory. In the picture drawn by the Evangelists men could see no beauty that they should desire Him. They must be allowed to correct it themselves, and to put their own interpretation on it before it could be acceptable to their fastidious theological taste. No doubt something of this was due to the difficulty of conceiving two natures in the one person. But this difficulty itself was largely increased by departing from the simple Scriptural standards and by seeking for explanations



which in the nature of things were inadmissible. What it has led to and leads to still we can easily see from the following two quotations.

An ancient writer says, "Christ, though He knew the moment of His advent, yet that they might not ask Him any more about it said, '*I know it not.*'" And a modern writer says, "Since it would be impious to suppose that our Lord had pretended an ignorance which He did not experience, we are led to the conclusion that what He partook as man was not actual ignorance, but such deficiency in the means of arriving at truth as belongs to mankind." From such statements as these it is well that we should understand the morass of quibbling and deceit into which we are led, once we desert the plain statements of Scripture and seek to show that there was anything unreal about the humanity of our Lord. In the light of modern controversies on the question it is well to state frankly that there is no derogation of His Divine claims in saying that in His physical life He was in all

points man like unto ourselves. This does not please some people, who range themselves with the incredulous Israel of the prophet's vision, and when their King appears to them in lowly human guise declare still, as they declared of old, "He hath no form or comeliness, and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

Our business, however, is with the prophet's prediction, and with its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. And when we come to look between the lines of it, and to see it from the standpoint not of frail human judgments but of the eternal purpose of God, we can easily see that there is more to be said for the human manifestation of this Divine Saviour than those who hide their faces from Him can understand. It is the humanity of Christ which constitutes the force of His claim upon the hearts of men. Our natural instinct demands a High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The very reason which sometimes makes Christ despised and rejected of men, to all those

who have eyes to see gives Him His real power over their lives. In the human life of Jesus, the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, we see embodied the story of the long love of God to men. No revelation of it as religious truth, or by processes of abstract reasoning, could bring it home to us as it is brought home in the moving record of Christ's earthly life.

It is this that gives Him the sole right to claim the title, Son of Man—that He entered into, shared and realised in Himself our human needs and affections and pains. No doubt to the natural man it would seem as though He ought to have dwelt in the high places of the earth, that He should have come visibly trailing clouds of glory, and attended by legions of angels, that He should have spoken to the wise, the noble, and the good. But it shows Him greater and better than any dreams of ours that He came amid the poor and humble and called to Himself those that labour and are heavy laden. When He took upon Him the form of a servant He did more for men than would

have been possible in any other way. He made it easy for them to come to Him in their needs, and to feel that they could talk with Him as a man talketh with His familiar friend. Probably the shyest of us all never felt nervous or abashed before Him. And this is because He was so free from false self-consciousness, and so deep in His human sympathy and in His knowledge of the heart of man.

The Incarnation is the first step in the completion of that task towards which all religions had been striving since the beginning of the world : the task of bringing God and man together. It enlarges the whole horizon of the human mind and of human experience. It removes at a single stroke those doubts and fears and midnight terrors which otherwise torment the soul. The acknowledgment of God in Christ is not merely the solution of a metaphysical puzzle, still less is it something dishonourable to God Himself ; it is the answer of God's love to the craving of our highest instincts, it is the experience which most helps to fulfil the

promise of our manhood made in the image of God.

And it is through this human life of Jesus that we obtain our true conception of His Divinity. If we cast it from us as an uncomely and incredible thing, what have we left? It is absurd to reproach us with reading God in the terms of man's experience: how else can we read Him? What do we know of the Divine Being apart from His self-revelation in human life? It is when we realise that Jesus was so truly man that we have to go further and see that He was more. Suppose we translate Him, as some would have us do, into a legendary hero, with a miraculous body, with pretended sufferings, and an unreal death; suppose we twist and turn His speech until we make it mean anything but what the plain sense of it seems to warrant—we may satisfy our curiosity and love of the marvellous, but we have taken away our Lord. The very essence of His Being and work is that He was found in fashion as a man—humbling self even to the very dust. It is



#### 44 DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN

because He has stooped so low that He can raise us so high. This should not make us despise and cast Him out, but draw ever nearer to Him in humble adoration, and say with Browning's David, as the final expression of our faith :

He who did most shall bear most, the strongest shall  
stand the most weak,

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my flesh  
that I seek

In the Godhead, I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be  
A Face like my Face that receives thee ; a Man like to  
me

Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever : a hand like  
this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee. See  
the Christ stand !

WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE  
HEALED

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.—  
ISAIAH liii. 4-6 (R.V.).

### III

#### WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED

IN these verses the penitent people of Israel are represented as continuing their apology for the rejection of the Servant of God. In the earlier part of the poem they have been concerned mainly with the external and physical aspect of His sufferings. He was so lowly in appearance, and so marred in His mien that they quite failed to recognise His worth and beauty. But now they go on to speak of another view of the whole matter, and one which to them, or to a man like the prophet writing for them, was natural and indeed inevitable—viz. the moral aspect of the Servant's suffering. We must remember here that the Jew was never able wholly to rid himself of the idea that all the ills that flesh is heir to are penal—that they

are to be regarded as the direct consequence of wrong somewhere and somehow done. And so the first impression produced on observers by the spectacle of the Servant's pain was that He was suffering at the hands of God for His own sin. They confessed, "We regarded Him as stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." The word "stricken" here is a word frequently used of leprosy, and shows that the people judged God's Servant as his friends judged Job, and measured the greatness of his sin by the greatness of his sufferings. For leprosy was regarded as a special sign of God's anger against wrong-doers, and as a very terrible and effectual sentence of excommunication. That was the first impression produced by Him who was a man of pains and familiar with ailing. But it was soon succeeded by another and truer impression, and one in every respect most remarkable.

The hand of God was indeed upon Him, but it was on account not of Himself but of others. "It was our sickness that He bore and our pains He carried them." "He was pierced through our rebellions,



crushed through our sins.” The plain meaning of this is that the Servant was implicated in the reproach and punishment of the people’s sins, He bore them in the sense of sharing them and being involved in their consequences. But that there is a further and deeper idea implied the next lines in the poem go on to show. “The chastisement to win our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes was healing wrought for us.” Here comes out very clearly what has been indicated again and again—that the sufferings of the Servant of the Lord are practical and serve a practical end. As we might paraphrase: His was the chastisement which procures our peace, and His the stripes by which healing comes to us. And so the strophe ends with the emphatic declaration, “We had all gone astray like sheep, we had turned each to his own way, and Yahweh made to light on Him the sin of us all.” In other words the Servant is regarded as a sacrifice, and His suffering as being vicarious and redemptive in its character and effects.

In the main idea of this passage there

is nothing foreign to Jewish thought. The notion of a sacrificial victim, suffering for sin, bearing it and taking it away, was closely bound up with some of the most impressive and beautiful of the Jewish religious ceremonials. What is strange here is that the idea should be applied to the Messiah—the chosen Servant of God. No doubt He was in later times often regarded as the deliverer of His people, but that He would deliver them through sacrifice, and bear their sins that He might take them away, involved a spiritual interpretation of His work altogether foreign to, and infinitely above the popular forecast.

And yet the first and strongest impression produced by the life of Jesus Christ is that it was a very direct fulfilment of these words. His treatment of the sick and suffering during His lifetime suggested to the Evangelist the prophet's words : " Our sickness He bore, and our pains He carried them." And His death, with the sufferings that accompanied and preceded it, was universally held to have realised the prophet's vision of one who was pierced

for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Indeed, we need not spend any pains in proving the correspondence between the experience of Jesus and this prophecy. Whether we like it or not, the idea of atonement is intimately bound up with the New Testament presentation of the work of Jesus Christ and with the whole history of Christian thought. And it is still among the most active and powerful of the doctrines of the Christian faith. It influences men in two very different ways. Those with whom it is not merely a question of belief, but a matter of religious experience, find in it the sum and centre of their spiritual life. The death of Jesus Christ is not only to them the revelation of God's Love, but they have found in it what they have never been able to discover elsewhere—a sufficient ground for the forgiveness of their sins. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim they have trudged along weary and heavy laden until they have left their burden at the Cross of Jesus Christ. Their sense that Christ has done for them what they could never do for themselves has meant for

them not only a new revelation but a new life. And their gratitude has been in proportion. They cling to the great truth here involved with an intensity of zeal born of real knowledge. To say anything against it seems to them to attack the very Palladium of their faith. They may not always be wise in their methods of defence, but at least they have something to defend, something more precious to them than life itself.

On the other hand there are those to whom this doctrine seems the most vulnerable point in Christianity. The Cross is to them an offence and a stumbling-block, and the doctrine of the Cross is even worse, and excites their bitterest opposition and their most refined contempt. To them the idea of vicarious suffering for sin is altogether repugnant and inconceivable. They pour scorn upon some of the crude representations of it in popular preaching, they arraign it as unjust, unnecessary, and altogether alien to the idea of a God who is Love. The suffering of Christ was the inevitable con-

flict of a good man with a corrupt society—that and nothing more. Now our business here is not to defend the doctrine of the Atonement against such attacks as these, but rather to ask what light, if any, is thrown upon it by the prophecy before us. And in doing so we may find something which may be of service to us all and especially to the two classes of persons just mentioned.

In discussing, then, the meaning and efficacy of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the first essential is that we shall take wide views. We have not to do here with a single item in a fairly comprehensive creed, but with a subject which is as deep and wide as human experience. It is a question which cannot possibly be studied in camera or in vacuo, but must be brought into relation with the numerous other moral, historical, spiritual and psychological problems which it raises. Least of all must we, as many earnest Christians do, conclude that the whole matter is an inscrutable mystery into which we must not seek to pry, that all we need to do is to accept the



fact for ourselves and leave all explanations of it as undesirable and perhaps impossible. That is a favourite attitude to-day, but one altogether incompatible with a reasonable faith. Of course we cannot attempt any thorough examination of the question here, but we may, under the guidance of the prophet's words, seek to show that the ideas which it involves are neither unjust nor unreasonable, but closely bound up with human experience and with the providential action of God.

And (1) the conception of the Servant's suffering as vicarious represents a growth in the ideas of God's people and comes to them not as a revelation from above, but as the answer to their own needs. This is admirably brought out by Dr. G. A. Smith in his discussion of the passage, and we may follow strictly what he says. At first the suffering of the Servant simply causes surprise, then the people pass judgment upon it and feel that it makes Him contemptible; but they are forced to consider it further, and so reach the idea that it is penal, from which it is not a very long step to the con-

clusion that its penalty is vicarious and has to do with sins committed by themselves—in other words that His suffering is not merely disciplinary, but redemptive. All this is included in the prophet's teaching, but the notable thing about it is that it comes not with the usual "Thus saith the Lord" of a divine decree, but as a confession of conscience and an expression of human need. And this would serve to indicate that the idea of vicarious suffering does not belong merely to the region of dogmatic religion or even of revelation, but that it is a great and living fact of human experience. It is a very common mistake to regard it as being an institution of religion and as such needing apology; whereas, so far from being in conflict with our highest ideas of justice and morality, it is an inevitable part of all deep moral experience and has operated throughout the history of the race as a powerful redemptive force. In all human associations, whether of the closer kind, such as in the family, or of the looser kind in the State and in society, this factor has its part to play. No one has ever tried

to serve others without having had to face the necessity of suffering on their behalf.

The brightest pages in the history of mankind are those which tell the story of toil and self-sacrifice voluntarily undertaken by good men for bad, by the strong for the weak, by the innocent for the guilty. While it may be quite true that in the eye of the law every transgressor must bear his own punishment, it is very far from true that he must or can bear all the suffering that results from his transgression. This falls often on the heads of those who deserve it least, and many a time their bearing of it is the means of the sinner's redemption. How many parents to-day are living lives of obscurity and self-sacrifice and bearing untold burdens that they may cover the guilt of some spoilt and darling child, and save him as far as may be from the consequences of his sin, and give him once again an honourable start in life ! How often do we find wives doing this for worthless husbands, and sometimes even husbands for their wives ! And we know that there is power in such sacrifices as these ; that the

long and loving hopes thus cherished are not always frustrated ; and that multitudes in the world to-day owe all they have and are to the glad self-sacrifice of those who loved them in their time of need. If we are to banish vicarious suffering from human experience the world will be a poorer place than ever, and we quench the one ray of real heroism which brightens some of the meanest and most sordid lives.

And it is no very great thing to ask that this same principle should be found to cover the relations between God and man. Indeed the instinct of man has seized upon the idea from the first and, in more or less crude form, has embodied it in all religious worship. While it may have suited theologians to express the matter in legal and forensic terms, it has not been so with men left to themselves. These, like the penitent Israelites in the prophet's vision, have approached the matter from the side of morality and of conscience. Of course if sin be a mere trifle, there is no need for redemption or atonement. But the difficulty is that men when they are at all in earnest

have never been able to persuade themselves that sin is a trifling thing. When they have once realised it and come face to face with its bitter sequel in remorse, they know too that of themselves they are absolutely impotent to atone for the wrong done and to wipe out the contracted guilt. Even forgiveness, the putting away of resentment on the part of one whom they have wronged, is not enough to appease their distress and to answer their need. A quick and living conscience refuses to be satisfied with anything that we ourselves can give or do. Men cannot rid themselves of the belief in a moral order; they know that a wrong done lasts, and that once they have given themselves over to the power of sin they are, so far as their own efforts are concerned, as helpless as trapped birds—they know that in their need only God can help them. And it is this which enables them to find relief in the religion of Jesus Christ. There remorse and guilt are dealt with as they never have been elsewhere. It is not a question of bargaining between Christ and God. There we see in Christ God taking



the burden on Himself. The point is not now what man can do, but what God has done for man. It is by His stripes that we are healed. Our sins are forgiven and the chain we have bound round ourselves has been broken, because God has taken the great task upon Himself. All that needed to be done, all that conscience could demand, all that the severest sense of justice could require, has been accomplished—and all the better so that it has been not by human weakness, but by the mighty power and measureless love of God Himself.

Now it cannot be denied that this is a hard doctrine. From the outsider's point of view it is difficult and almost impossible. Still we must never forget that it is not a doctrine for outsiders. It is not a truth which can be argued about in the abstract like a mathematical proposition. Only those who need it can really understand it, or enter into its secret. And those who need it are those who have felt the terror and ruin of sin. The great thing about the Atonement is that it can be verified in experience. To the soul tortured with remorse and with

fearful expectation of judgment it can speak the word of peace. Only those who have learnt out of bitter trouble to say "All we like sheep have gone astray" will be able to find comfort also in saying, "And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

2. When the prophet speaks of the sacrifice of God's Servant he does more than show that it is in answer to man's need, and that there is nothing abnormal or exceptional about its vicarious character. We may admit at once that the chief difficulty about the death of Jesus Christ is not merely its sacrificial aspect. There is the previous question as to the power of Christ to accomplish this work of atonement. Or, as it is sometimes popularly put, where is the link of connection between my sin, my forgiveness, and the death of Jesus Christ? You can understand the sacrifice of a mother for her loved son, and all the good that may come out of it for him because she is mother and he son, and the link between them is already so close. And it might help us if we could find anything analogous

to this in the relations between ourselves and Jesus Christ. Now it is just upon this point that the prophet touches. To him the relation between the suffering Servant of God and the people of God is exceedingly close. In certain aspects of his thought he even identifies the two, and the Servant stands distinctly as the representative of the people. He indicates, that is, that this Servant occupied a peculiar position in relation both to man and God.

Now, making all allowance for the fact that the prophet was not a trained theologian but a dramatic poet, we cannot but be struck with the way in which he here anticipates the position which Jesus Christ claimed for Himself, and which has been assigned to Him in the thought of Christendom. It is here that this section of his poem is seen to be in close relation with those which have preceded it. He has spoken of the exaltation of this Servant of the Lord, of the suffering He must needs undergo, and of the great work that was to be accomplished by it. He then proceeds to indicate more exactly what that work

is and how it is to be done. Or to explain the matter in terms of Christian revelation, we have here the link that binds together the Incarnation and the Atonement. The point has some importance, because in modern religious thought the tendency is to separate these two. Or rather the fashion of the hour is to find the centre of gravity of Christianity, not, as was once the case, in the Atonement, but in the Incarnation. On any fair interpretation of the facts, however, these two are one. God was manifest in the flesh that He might take upon Himself man's sin, and God could not take on Himself man's sin in any but a fictitious sense unless He were manifest in the flesh. The Incarnation without the Atonement is incomplete, the Atonement without the Incarnation is inconceivable. And it is when we come to realise who Jesus Christ was, and what was His relation to man on the one hand and God on the other, that we see how His death assumes a different aspect from that of one who laid down His life as a martyr does for his cause.

Now it is a recognised commonplace of Christian thought to regard Jesus Christ as the Head and Representative of the human race. Between Him and us there is a solidarity of a very wonderful kind. Through Him men attain to their true position as sons of God. In Him they have the life more abundant. He is the source and fountain of all real spiritual vitality. In union with Him we have life; apart from Him we are dead while we live. All of this is language which we hear constantly on the lips of Christian men, and it witnesses to some belief in a special connection between humanity and Jesus Christ. But, as Dr. Dale points out, this belief has never been formulated; there is no clear and articulate conception of it before our minds. This is natural enough, for it relates to matters which are more easily experienced than expressed. Yet if there is anything at all in the spiritual union between men and Christ we have a right to use the fact in order to illumine the point under consideration, viz. the connection between Christ's death and the sin of man. And



it is in His voluntary sacrifice for the sins of men that Christ's headship of the race finds its highest and most glorious expression. It is His relation to mankind which really makes the sacrifice possible. As He took upon Himself the form of our humanity and bare our sicknesses and griefs, so He is able also to bear our sins. And this He does not in any formal way, as having imputed to Him what is not really His, but through the Law which binds our life to Him and makes His life the spring of ours. Of course this does not become effective for us until we receive it by the act of our own wills. When once conscience is aroused to the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the need for some redemptive power outside ourselves and independent of the best we can do becomes great and pressing. And this need is answered in the death of Jesus Christ, whereby He endured suffering for sin. Through Him, therefore, in virtue of the connection between His life and ours, we become freed of its burden and have the right to be sons of God. It is the place which Christ holds in human

life and history which gives new force and meaning to His death, and makes it reasonable that we should find in it fresh moral stimulus and the power of an endless life for the sons of men.

The same kind of result may be gathered from the relation of Jesus Christ with God. That there is something unique in this relation even those confess who are least inclined to magnify the divine personality of Jesus Himself. Even if we only assume that He has for man the religious value of God we cannot but believe that this gives a new significance to the suffering He endured and to the death He died. The least that it involves is a new reading of the heart of God towards man, a putting away of all Divine resentment against the sinner, a large and generous outflow of pity, sympathy, and love. It gives a new meaning and depth to His eternal purpose of the redemption of the race. And it involves more than this. The divine holiness of Jesus Christ reads a new meaning into His love for men. In Him it becomes not merely love that pities and weakly

yields to wrong, and cries, "Let us say no more about it," but grace that overcomes evil at the cost of any sacrifice. The assumption that Jesus deals with sin from the divine rather than the human standpoint has much wider bearings than we sometimes think. In our simplicity we would assimilate His action to that of men, and say that God in forgiving only acts as would an earthly father or friend. There is no sacrifice or atonement needed in the one case any more than in the other. But we forget that between us and God there comes what can never come between us and an earthly father—sin. In the reflection of God's holiness on the soul of man is seen the black and bitter stain of guilt. And that stain is not so easily wiped out. The great enemy is not lightly vanquished. The work of God in Christ is not merely the work of forgiveness, but of redemption—and there is a vast difference between the two. The cost of that redemption to the love and holiness of God is such that we have no standards by which to measure it. We know only

its fruit, the free, glad, willing grace and mercy of God to sinful men. And the Cross and sacrifice of Jesus Christ tell us among other things this, that God's chosen task is not simply to declare His grace, but to give effect to it in His own Person and life. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."





**OPPRESSED AND AFFLICTED**

He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth ; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb ; yea, he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away ; and as for his generation who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living ? for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And they made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death ; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.  
—ISAIAH liii. 7-9 (R.V.).

## IV

### OPPRESSED AND AFFLICTED

THESE words open a new stanza in the poem, and it is probable that in them the penitent people now cease speaking, and that we are to hear the voice of the prophet in confirmation of their words and in comment upon them. He mentions four main points in the character and experience of the Servant, which may be classified as follows: (1) His silence under suffering, (2) The voluntariness of His sacrifice, (3) The miscarriage of justice involved in His death, (4) The sinlessness of His life.

Here again we may ask at once how the life of Jesus Christ bears out the prophet's words. The Incarnation is here set before us in some of its deeper aspects and in its more intimate bearing on human life and needs. In the picture of this meek and patient sufferer, of this crimeless criminal,

we can read again the story of how God has made Himself known to those that have ears to hear.

1. "He was oppressed yet He humbled himself, and opened not His mouth." "He humbled Himself." No more real or beautiful expression of the Incarnation can be found than that contained in words like these. And Jesus set His own seal upon them when He said, "I am among you as a serving man." He came into the world "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His Person," but disguising it all under the garb of a slave. In all the precepts that He left us, there are none more difficult or more apparently impossible to follow than those which bid us be silent under suffering and wrong and turn our cheek to the smiter; and if we would measure the moral interval between Him and ourselves we have only to mark how He practised what He preached. It is quite true that the standard is not the same for Him as it is for us, and it is in this difference that the significance of His silence lies.

All literature rings with the bitter cry of those who have felt themselves wronged. To the Jews silence under suffering was a thing almost unknown. Job and Jeremiah and many of the Psalmists have become as a by-word for the extravagance of their complaints. And when Jesus opened not His mouth and would not strive nor cry, it was because He was not as other men. It has been well said that there are two voices in man's complaint—the voice of doubt and the voice of guilt. Jesus could use neither of these. To Him the suffering He was called on to endure was not aimless, and gave Him no reason to doubt the goodness and mercy of His Father. He saw as we often do not and cannot behind the veil. He realised that there was a purpose in it all, and the joy that was set before Him became as a blessed anodyne that helped Him to endure the shame. His lowly service and suffering were such integral parts of the work He had come into the world to do that He took them quietly and almost as a matter of course. And His example teaches us at least this, that



we may look for the silver lining to the clouds above our heads. In much of what we are called to endure there is a gracious and fruitful discipline, and happy are they who can see it and whose faith can help them to be still and open not their mouths. Nor could Jesus ever count His suffering as the punishment for His sin. The most startling thing about His life is the absence from it of repentance and regret. He was never haunted by the memory of a past that He would fain undo, and never needed to bow beneath the strokes which His own folly had earned. He came to serve men, and He served them to the uttermost, cost what it might.

But there is another and still more beautiful trait in His silence. It shows the completeness and purity of His love for men. We are inclined to wish sometimes that He had drawn attention to the greatness of the sacrifice He made, that we might understand it better. But would not this have been just to spoil His gift? The gifts of true love are always unostentatious, and it is the patient endurance of Jesus

which helps us to understand the freedom of divine grace. If we are inclined to question the cost to Himself of the Redemption Christ wrought because He did not proclaim it upon the housetops, let us remember how carefully we conceal from those we love what it costs us to make them happy, and how we count our own inconvenience as nothing, if it can help or profit them. And so it is not altogether fanciful for us to see in the silence of Him who, as a sheep before her shearers, was dumb, the fullness and freedom of His love. It is as though it cost Him nothing and flowed out of the sheer superfluity of His kindness, or as one has said, "The cost is so perfectly and freely borne that it never appears in any way to mar the graciousness of grace or deflower the Father's love."

2. "As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb."

The simile employed here serves to strengthen the idea in the former verse, viz. that the Servant of God suffered in silence and without protest. But there is another shade of meaning in it as well,

namely, that His suffering is voluntary, and even self-imposed. The reference here is probably to a sacrificial lamb; and it was a familiar superstition in regard to animal sacrifices, that the victim must go to the altar willingly and even gladly, if the sacrifice were to be complete.

To carry out this latter idea the victim was often decked with flowers, and if it resisted and struggled, this was looked upon as an evil omen, and men would be sceptical as to any good which might come from a sacrifice so marred. And it is not without purpose and reason that the Scriptures suggest again and again that all the service and sacrifice of Jesus was voluntary. It is not, theologically speaking, a question of His yielding to superior force, or being made the helpless victim of the wrath of God. If we can at all enter into His consciousness or understand the meaning of some of the deepest things the apostles witness of Him, we shall believe that He gave Himself freely for the need and sin of men. And remembering who He was who so gave Himself, we find that the idea of His willingness be-

comes full of meaning. It takes away all that sting of injustice in His sacrifice which is so real a difficulty to many minds. He did not need to be forced into that long road which led Him from "the poor manger to the bitter cross."

If there were times in His history when He seemed to be under constraint, and set His face to go forward as to some desperate enterprise, the constraint was that of His own resolute will. It was by no forced labour that He spent Himself almost to exhaustion in relieving the wants of the sick and sorry multitudes around Him. And when He came to tread the Via Dolorosa of the Cross He needed not to be driven thereon, but went forth willingly, feeling that He had a deacease to accomplish at Jerusalem ere His work could be done. And in all this surely we can see that God's love so manifested was no sudden spasm of affection, but had a deep, eternal purpose behind it. This is the vital truth, that even the old Calvinistic terms of election and predestination have not been able altogether to conceal. Given the freedom and

sin of man, then Redemption is rooted in the very nature of God. His love had its special time of manifestation when the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, but it did not then begin to be. He loved us before the foundation of the world, and therefore nothing can separate us from His love. The redeeming work of Christ is but the expression in time of God's everlasting purpose of grace. As the Scripture tells us, His love was active for our benefit while we were yet sinners and blind and deaf to its appeal. And it is from this that our sense of security comes and the assurance of our faith. The willing sacrifice of Christ gives us the right to trust God to the uttermost, and shows us that He deals with us not on the basis of mere caprice, but on principles that are eternal. It teaches us that we cannot measure the divine love by any standards of time—it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Now, the old mystics used to say that it is impossible for love not to be returned in some measure. Whether we believe that or not, we shall agree, if our moral sense is



not quite dead, that such love as Christ's ought to be returned. We shall not, therefore, be unwilling to find the spring and motive of Christian life in a passion of love and gratitude for Him who freely gave Himself for us all. Were Jesus Christ a mere passive victim of the wrath of God, this would hardly be possible. But granted the freedom and spontaneity of His sacrificing love, and it is only natural that it should bring forth a like devotion in return. As we meditate afresh on all the suffering, service, and sacrifice of the Son of Man, our lips seem unconsciously to frame the words of ancient song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." We cannot altogether still within us the stirring of holier impulses and of living gratitude. Our joy is touched with the pain of remorse, and that in itself serves to quicken our affection and rouses within us the blundering desire for better things. It is for most of us the tragedy of the Christian life that we can do so little for Him who has done such great things for us. Like the apostle, we would do good, but evil is present with us. Our full inten-

tion is to confess the Christ always and everywhere. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. There are times when we can fully enter into the poet's remorseful words :

I seem to hear your laugh, your talk, your song,  
It is not true that Love will do no wrong,

Poor child.

And did you think, when you so cried and smiled,  
How I, in lonely nights, should lie awake,  
And of these words your full avengers make ?

Poor child, poor child.

And now unless it be

That sweet amends thrice told are come to thee,  
Oh God, have Thou no mercy upon me,

Poor child.

That is the cry of an affection that has shown itself a poor return for lavished love, and it might be the confession of all Christians to Jesus Christ. If our Christianity means anything, it means for us an acknowledgment of a debt to Christ which we can never pay—it means an unceasing and earnest desire to take up our cross after Him, to lay ourselves on the altar of sacrifice and make some poor amends for the love of Him who for our sakes was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a

sheep before her shearers is dumb opened not His mouth.

3. "Excluded from judgment He was taken away, and His fate who considered it, that He was cut off out of the land of the living, that for our rebellions He was smitten to death? And His grave was made with the wicked, and with workers of evil His tomb." The meaning of this is that God's Servant was to end His days by violence and prematurely—that by a gross miscarriage of justice He was to die the death of a malefactor. We can easily see how closely the experience of Jesus fulfilled these words; indeed, they came true in every point save this, that He was buried in a felon's grave. Here, however, as elsewhere, the spirit of the prophet's words is exactly reproduced in the life and death of Jesus Christ. It is not out of place to remember that His death was not compassed by any miraculous stroke of fate, but was the result of the operation of mischievous human laws, and came about by a forced and tyrannous judicial process.

The fact helps us almost more than the

picture of disease drawn in the earlier part of the poem to understand how it was that He was despised and rejected of men. As we should say, He died by the hands of the common hangman, and those who condemned Him were justified from their own point of view in regarding Him as an outlaw and a felon. It seemed as though no touch of degradation was to be wanting to the full cup of His sufferings. So there is here one aspect at any rate of the way in which His death was related to the sin of the world. It is not the only one or the deepest one, but it is one which should give men pause and serve as a needed warning in a time like ours. The death of Jesus, we say, was a judicial murder. He came into sharp conflict with the religious, social, and political prejudices of His day. As society was constituted then there was no room in it for a Reformer, a Redeemer such as He. True, a Messiah was needed, and men were straining their eyes seeking for the Moses of a New Exodus to lead them from the Roman bondage. When they found that this was not to be Christ's

chosen task, but that He would lay His own yoke on them, they scorned Him as a traitor and a fool.

It has often been pointed out that the circumstances of His trial and condemnation were such as to bring out man's sin at its blackest and to show the very worst which human hate, malignity and prejudice could do. And the judgment of history on this crime has done it ample justice. The names of the chief actors in the tragedy still live with a most unenviable notoriety, and their conduct has been visited with the contempt and reprobation it deserves. But the central figure of the criminal has been wonderfully rehabilitated. No one now dreams of saying that there was any justice in His condemnation, or that He deserved the least part of His punishment. The whole civilised world, consciously or unconsciously, celebrates His coming among men, and does honour to His memory. And yet how few are there to-day who can free themselves from the blame of crucifying Him afresh! In the social and political life of our time has He not often to fight



the great battle of His earthly career over again? Wherever, in a land that calls itself Christian, injustice is allowed to reign, man's inhumanity to man goes unpunished and approved, and the spirit of self-seeking and aggression swells in people's hearts, there, however little we may like to think it, the crimes of Golgotha and Calvary are repeated, Christ is again despised and rejected of men, His teaching set at naught and His example derided. And the thing is made no better, but infinitely worse, by the fact that men profess now to take Him as the Lord of their lives and the guide of their conduct. It is not as though their hostility was open and avowed: they add insult to their injury.

What is true of the public is true also of the individual life. In the light of Christ's love for us what are we to say of the slackness of our enthusiasm for Him? Do we not ourselves out-Pharisee the Pharisees in the eagerness with which we call Him Lord, Lord, but yet do not the things which He says? And so may we not learn at least one lesson from the crowding

memories and the dear associations of His life, and let it kindle within us fresh fires of devotion to the will and service of the Christ, so that our lives shall be more closely conformed to the pattern of His, and our lip-service be translated into living deeds? In the light of all He has done for us, the least we can do is to avoid the reproach of the words, "And His fate who considered it, that for our rebellions He was smitten to death?"

4. This section of the prophecy is summed up in the solemn words, "Although He had done no violence and deceit was not in His mouth." And the words serve to illustrate the unique and sublime character of the suffering Servant of God. So the abiding impression of the personality of Jesus Christ is one of the transcendent moral perfection of a man who was in all points tempted like as we are and yet without sin. And it is very wonderful how this impression persists. When we have made all possible allowances for the enthusiastic and unguarded testimony of the disciples, there still remains something

in Him that no ordinary causes can explain. The belief in His sinlessness is not a matter merely of theological dogma—it is the inevitable and almost universal result of a candid study of the Scripture portraiture. In the brief record of His ministry we see Him under varied circumstances more or less difficult, and subject to trials that are sometimes really severe. He did not live, as some great men have done, in an atmosphere of adulation or lapped in ease; He had to stand the test of unpopularity and unbelief, was despised and rejected of men. And in all of it He holds a position of infinite moral superiority to all around Him. He is not the first among equals, but stands solitary in the magnificent isolation of a perfect life. And this is why men find Him to be so inexplicable—that He was not as other men, and that He shines with the glory of another world than ours.

This is another and perhaps the greatest of the lessons that His sufferings have to teach. Through them He was shown to be perfect. They brought out the strength and purity of His resolution and all the depth of His

consecrated purpose of love. He presents to us the strange spectacle of a purity of heart unsullied by remorse and of a piety that knows no shadow of penitence. Judged by all ordinary human standards this would indicate Him to have been a hypocrite of hypocrites; and yet even those who have sometimes fancied He might have been self-deceived have been very slow to suggest that He was consciously a deceiver. In fact, the moral problem which He presents involves one of the two alternatives which the ancient fathers used to state—either He was God or He was not a good man. This latter solution is so in the teeth of all the testimony that no serious student of His life has ever adopted it. On the other hand, there are no data for explaining Him or classifying Him as other great men are classified, as the products of heredity and environment. He stands in an order by Himself, not only as a supreme religious genius but in virtue of His divinity as the fount and channel of religious life for others. And this is an aspect of His character which remains of first-class im-

portance for us. We may not, perhaps, always understand or appreciate the spiritual and theological interpretations of Jesus Christ. But the story of His moral greatness is another thing, and appeals to us in language that we have learnt to use ourselves. We see here the secret of His power over others. We know that it means that He is not lifted high above us into a region where we can never follow Him, but that though He is for us the ideal, yet that, as we share His nature, He can inspire ours. And so we not only worship Him from afar, but are drawn to Him with the cords of love, and He becomes to us not only an example but an inspiration.

Our very frailty brings us near  
Unto the Lord of heaven,  
To every grief, to every tear,  
Such glory strange is given.



HE SHALL DIVIDE THE SPOIL

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him : he hath put him to grief : when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many : and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong : because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors : yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.—ISAIAH liii. 10–12 (R.V.).

## V

### HE SHALL DIVIDE THE SPOIL

IN this last section of the poem the prophet continues his reflections on the tragedy of the life and death of the suffering Servant of God. And the vision he sees now is wider and loftier than any hitherto. His gaze goes out beyond the time of the Servant's advent and pierces the far future, and he pictures to himself the result of the Servant's work and the splendid and enduring triumph He was to win. The passage contains three main ideas, which may be described as dealing with the roots of the Servant's mission in the past, the secret of its power, and the fruit it is to bear in time to come. Transferring these ideas to the witness in history of Jesus Christ, we have :

1. The root or origin of His work in the

purpose of God. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief . . . and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."<sup>1</sup> The phrase "it pleased the Lord" does not imply that God delighted in the sufferings of His Servant as such, but rather that it was His good pleasure that the Servant should suffer in view of the ends to be served. The idea is that He came among men and did His work and offered His sacrifice in accordance with the eternal purpose of God. And the statement of this here means that those who witnessed the Servant's work must not allow the grievous miscarriage of justice involved in His death to mislead them and cause them to think that it was an accident, or contrary to the will of God, or that it meant that God had forsaken His own. So far from that, it was the purpose of the Lord to bruise Him. His life of humiliation and tragic death simply carried out the will of God and fulfilled His ends.

<sup>1</sup> In this sermon the text of the Revised Version is adhered to.

The statement of this here is full of importance for us. It is one of the many hints in the Old Testament that the later revelation of the loving purpose of God was not a statement of a new truth, but simply the unveiling of a side of the divine nature which ignorance or prejudice had hitherto concealed from the eyes of men. God's dealings with us are so much wider and wiser than our thoughts of Him, that misunderstandings are inevitable. They may be minimised however and shorn of all their mischief if in the light of revelation we keep ever before us the unchangeable moral perfection of God. He has created man free and finite, but under a moral law. It is of the essence of man's freedom that he can voluntarily refuse to obey the law he knows. It belongs to the essence of his finite nature that he should be subject to development, progress and probation.

Further, it is of the essence of the moral law that wilful refusal to conform to it must issue in moral and other evil. But it is the essence of God's nature as love that He will exhaust all the power of His love and wisdom



to save men from moral transgression and its consequences, without compromising their freedom. In other words, man created free can resist moral influences and is subject to sin. But this was in the mind of God from the beginning, not as a necessary but as a possible thing, the bane of our free and finite nature. But alongside of the bane was the antidote—the purpose of God for man's redemption, the aim to leave no stone unturned, and not even to stop short at self-sacrifice, in order that man may be saved from his own wilfulness and from the consequences which it breeds. When we are daunted and horrified by the spectacle of a world sunk in misery and sin, our first impulse is to blame God that He could let such things be. But a more sane and true estimate will cause us to lay the blame on the shoulders of sinful men, and to see that God glorifies Himself even in sinners, in that He has made provision for their redemption in despite of sin. And if we are asked the familiar question, Would it not have been wiser and more in accordance with His love for God so to have made men that they could

not sin, and thus have avoided the necessity for sacrifice on His part? we may boldly answer, in the light of such knowledge as we have, Certainly not. It were a far grander and nobler thing for God to save men in despite of sin, even at the price of the loss of multitudes, than for Him to have created them doomed to a perfection which they could not escape.

It is such considerations as these which lend significance to the statement of God's eternal purpose in Jesus Christ. This is the truth which old theologians used to call by the name of *prevenient grace*, and which underlies the many and more or less false statements of the Scriptural doctrine of election. The one point in all this which concerns us is that God's grace is eternal, anticipatory of us and our sin, and we can no more do anything to make Him gracious than we can kindle sunbeams in the sun. This is the real meaning of election—that in His work of redemption God is moved not by any action on the part of man seeking Him, but of His own eternal and unchanging love. It is, as Milton sang:

Grace that finds her way,  
The speediest of Thy winged messengers,  
To visit all Thy creatures, and to all  
Comes unprevented, unimplored, unsought.

The most striking exhibition of this grace is in the mission of Jesus Christ to save men from their sins. He revealed God's mind to man, not as being moved by a momentary access of tenderness, but as the same in its self-sacrificing love yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. It could not enter into the plans of God, if we may so speak, that the holy ideal He had set forth in the creation of man should be frustrated by the powers of evil. It is not the will of God that any should perish; and in the coming of Jesus Christ among men He not only declares His will that men should not fall utterly under the punishment they have brought upon themselves, but provides for them also a way of escape. And in this age-long purpose of salvation there is the most effective appeal to sinful men. "It is while we are yet sinners that God commendeth His love towards us." He does not need to wait till our righteousness has reached the

measure of His ideal, He waits to be gracious. Salvation is not wrung from Him by our importunity, it is a free gift. It was His will that Christ should suffer, and thus that no thought of cost should hinder the supreme and final expression of His love.

And so there is a hint for us here that we may find the key to many an earthly tragedy and to much human suffering in the will of God. To the ordinary observer the passion of Jesus would seem mere wanton cruelty and needless endurance of pain, but from the divine standpoint and in the larger light of history there is a meaning and purpose in it all. We too are called to suffer often in ways that seem harsh and needless. And nothing can so shed light upon our darkness as to be able to say that it is God's will and to subordinate our discipline to the larger knowledge and deeper moral purpose of God. Our own moral experience may thus become a key to the words, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him."

2. We have here too a further reference to the central idea in the work of Jesus Christ: "When Thou shalt make His soul an

offering for sin, He shall see His seed . . . . By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many and He shall bear their iniquities. . . . Yet He bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors."

The main idea here is contained in the phrase "an offering for sin." In this we have brought before us another aspect of the sacrifice and suffering of the Servant of God. When we read the phrase, as we surely must, through the ideas and associations of the later Jewish religious consciousness, it is not difficult to understand what it means. It shows us the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in relation to the moral law. The language used takes us back to the familiar ordinance of the Levitical code, whereby a wrong-doer was bound not only to make reparation to the party wronged, but over and above that to give satisfaction to the injured majesty of the Law. This was, strictly speaking, the guilt-offering. It was not enough for a man to make good the actual damage done by his sin, outraged justice must be vindicated as well. So when the Philistines had taken the ark of



Jehovah and wanted to be freed from the evil consequences it had brought upon them, it was not enough for them simply to restore the ark, they had to send back with it a guilt-offering as well before their sin could be forgiven.

Now, no doubt this seems a childish and barbarous device, a piling up of penalties which would certainly play into the hands of the priests, but which does not seem to serve any other purpose. We should be inclined to think that it belongs to a primitive religious condition, and that it can have no legitimate place in our thought as to the dealings of God with men. And at first sight this would certainly seem to be true. But we must distinguish here again between form and substance: when we go back to the ideas and principles which lay behind this guilt-offering and prompted men to its invention, we find they are not so mean and trifling as we think. Indeed the whole conception, strange as it is in our eyes, springs out of a true and grand instinct, an instinct which made men believe in a law and a right higher than all human ordinances, which

must be recognised and vindicated at any cost before transgression could be done away or man come into his right and proper relations with God. It is sometimes urged against certain aspects of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that they involve injustice of one kind or another, whereas the truth rather is that His sacrifice was a supreme vindication of divine righteousness and is found by the human mind to be necessary whenever there is before it a lofty idea of what that righteousness demands. As we have often seen before, low ideas as to the sinfulness of sin, and mean and restricted notions of goodness and justice, can make no room for sacrifice. But it is far otherwise when we take into account the Eternal Law of righteousness of which sin is the transgression. This law is the supreme manifestation of the will of God—it is not a human ordinance which can be lightly set aside. That it must be vindicated in the punishment of the sinner the human conscience abundantly testifies.

In many primitive races the first recognition of God is the recognition of the

moral law, before which the sinner trembles, fearing the consequences of his sin. And the penalty which the transgressor rightly dreads cannot be lightly remitted without doing grievous wrong. True, a judge or monarch may possess the prerogative of pardon, but it is one that must only be exercised on good reason given and in rare and exceptional cases, where there are circumstances mitigating guilt or minimising responsibility. In all other cases the law, as we say, must take its course. And for a judge or ruler to free men wholesale from the just consequences of their ill deeds would be to commit a monstrous crime. For it is not as if the punishment in the eye of the law were a mere reformatory process, the effort of society to turn the criminal into a good citizen. It may be that, and ought to be, but it is also much more. It is the vindication of the majesty of the law, and in idly remitting it a wrong is done not only to society but to the sinner himself.

Yet many people are quite content to believe that this wrong on a most vast

scale is committed by God. They say, Why can He not forgive sins without any atonement? If He is so good and kind as you say, why can He not just let the sinner go free and bid him make a fresh start? Why all this talk about atonement and sacrifice? Cannot God the all-powerful do as He likes? We might answer this question with the far profounder question of Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Is it not the very essence of a true love that in all its action justice shall be vindicated and righteousness maintained? And which were the more God-like and the more loving thing, to abolish distinctions between right and wrong and treat the saint and sinner alike, or to acknowledge the majesty of the law and in your own person vindicate it, so that the sinner might be set free from the curse of his sin and rise to the possibility of a new and larger life? It is this latter action on God's part that we have dimly foreshadowed to us in the description of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a guilt-offering for men. And we shall

hardly need to ask the question whether this were a work that Christ could do.

It is sometimes urged that it would be no real vindication of the law for a righteous and benevolent man to offer himself for punishment on condition that the criminal should go free. Were such an offer to be made in any court of justice in this country it would not only be refused but treated as unjust and immoral. And it is asked, therefore, How can the sacrifice of Christ in behalf of men be held to satisfy the claims of the eternal law of righteousness ? The answer to this question can only be found in the supposition that Jesus Christ is much more than a righteous and benevolent man. Apart from His divinity, with the unique relations it involves to God, to the eternal law, and to the human race, there is of course no atonement for sin. And it is because in the death of Jesus Christ men have seen God Himself stooping to rescue them, and at the same time by His sacrifice satisfying every righteous claim, that they have found in the atonement so made the secret of their deliverance



from the power and penalty of sin. The wonderful thing about this atoning sacrifice is this, that in spite of the difficulty, nay, the impossibility of its full comprehension, and in spite of its contradiction to many of our most elementary ideas of right, whenever the real facts of it have been known, they have kindled men's penitence for sin, and persuaded them of the grace of God, have lifted them from the depths of despair, and sent them on their road freed from their burdens and with a new song of unutterable joy upon their lips. In the experience of multitudes the old prophecy has been literally fulfilled, "When Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

3. The prophet at the close of his poem looks forward into the far distant future, and sees the ultimate and universal triumph of the suffering Servant of God. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He

shall divide the spoil with the strong.” There is no need to insist again here on the close connection there is between the finished work of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for the sins of men. Suffice it to say that in the Cross of Jesus Christ there is the most complete demonstration of the fact that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” It is more to our purpose just now to dwell on the fact of the exaltation of Jesus Christ and on the consequences which should flow from it for our Christian thought and service. It is a notable and healthy sign of our times that men are everywhere turning away from doctrines, creeds and confessions to Jesus Christ Himself, though it is unfortunate that in popular speech this is generally expressed as though it were a retrograde movement—back to Jesus Christ. It is probably to correct this that the phrase “the living Christ” has been coined, as though to show that the eyes of the world are turned not to the his-

torical Jesus who remains a blessed memory and example for men, but to the exalted Christ who sees of the travail of His soul in the present salvation which through Him comes to the children of men. It needs to be insisted on that this is a step forward and upward rather than backward. In these days we can have no true vision of Jesus Christ save as we regard Him in the light of all that He has accomplished in history and of all that He is doing in society around us. Just as the prophet recognised the grandeur and power of the Servant of the Lord through His forecast of the work He would do, so we must understand how Jesus sees of the travail of His soul before we can grasp the full significance of His mission in the world. He is to us not simply a name, a memory, a religious formula, He stands for the most attractive personal influence and the source of the purest inspiration that the world has ever known. His position to-day is not that of an anxious claimant for the suffrages of men, but of a King reigning in glory and strength. How often we

forget that He sees of the travail of His soul, that the Kingdom of God is in the midst of us, and that in that Kingdom Christ is King! If we ask still, as men always do, for a sign, we can see it most clearly in the evident fact of the superiority of those moral and spiritual forces for which the name of Jesus Christ stands over principalities and powers, over those mental and physical forces in which the greatness of this world consists.

The record of the word and work of Jesus among men, in spite of much evil and the many blemishes that have clung to it from the human side, remains an abiding testimony to His sovereign power. And if the past is great the future is greater still. The place which Christ holds in it and is to hold is the ground of our fairest hope. He shall see of the travail of His soul. All that He has done in His own person for the sorrows, needs and sins of men will not and cannot go for naught. All that is being done in His name—the ceaseless prayers put up to heaven, the sweet savour of many a self-sacrificing

life, the energy and passion of the great mass of faithful souls—all this tells indubitably, and will tell still more in larger results and grander enterprises in time to come. Truly He has seen His seed; through the freedom won by His suffering, and the forgiveness He has brought, men and women the world over have risen into newness of life, and stand the monuments of His mercy. Ask them what Christ means to them, and if His living presence in their lives is a reality or a dream, and they will tell you with bated breath and faltering lips of the wonders of His redeeming grace. He is to them the source of a new righteousness that has shed a strange glory over their lives. They may not be able to declare to you the why and wherefore of it all, but one thing they know, that whereas they were blind now they see. “Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.” This sets Him at once among the conquerors, the great powers of history. We have still a serene confidence in mighty arma-



ments and full treasures, but what pigmy weapons these are beside those of Jesus Christ! Men come and go, nations rise and fall, but His word abides. He rules the world from the Cross, which is His throne, and by reason of the prayers, self-sacrifice and saintly living of His followers, He divides the spoils of history with the strong. And so we look to Him to-day, not as one long dead and buried, but as one whose power is manifested all around us and whom we see living again in lives made better by His presence, and ruling the hearts and consciences of men with His law of love. Not only in the prophet's vision, but in the actual experience of great multitudes, is He "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely."



RECONCILIATION IN CHRIST

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.—2 COR. v. 19.

## VI

### RECONCILIATION IN CHRIST

THIS sentence is part of a great argument. But we shall run no risk of misunderstanding it if for a moment we detach it from its context and seek to study by themselves the truths which it embodies as in a nutshell. We have before us here the Incarnation and the Atonement, the twin pillars of the Christian faith. But the form in which the apostle states them shows that though they are two they cannot be separated; they are rooted in the same base, and stand or fall together. And it may serve some good purpose if we try to examine them in their relations.

1. "God was in Christ." This truth, which the apostle Paul profoundly believed, and which was the starting-point of all his thought upon the things of God, is supposed to be of all others the one



peculiarly acceptable to religious minds to-day. From the first dawn of the Christian era each age has had its special theological fashion; for good or for evil men have laid emphasis on some one side of Christian doctrine to the exclusion or the minimising of others. And these latter days have witnessed a widespread revival of belief in the Incarnation, as the most fundamental of all Christian verities. "That we only know God in Jesus Christ," "that Christ has for us the religious value of God," have become the new shibboleths of a great body of religious thinkers. We need not seriously object to this. The Incarnation, *with its implications*, is the very foundation of the edifice of Christian truth. Apart from it Christian revelation would be a mystery and almost a fraud. But it is one of the chief characteristics of the average human mind that it mostly does its thinking in sections, and makes progress not by steady advance all along the line, but by action and reaction, ebb and flow. Men never exalt one aspect of truth without, perhaps unconsciously, depreciating

another. If they are of a scientific turn of mind they think they must of necessity be anti-spiritual. If they are spiritually-minded, they find it difficult to accept the scientific point of view. If they believe profoundly in the Atonement, it seems they must overlook the importance of the Incarnation ; or if they restore the Incarnation to its due place, it can only be at the expense of the Atonement. And so they go blundering along, turning into darkness even the very passing glimpses of light that they obtain. It is so easy to forget that truth is one, and that a sectional view of it can never lead us very far. And in our pursuit of religious truth it is above all things necessary that we keep a due proportion and balance, and avoid exaggeration as we would error itself. It is well for the human mind sometimes to break up the clear white light of God's revelation into its component hues, but to see always red or blue or yellow is a sign of serious disease. And so, in our anxiety to be evangelical or broad, high or low, sound or unsound, we forget that every mere phase of religious

truth regarded as a phase leads to error, and that truth only lies midway between the extremes. This is a fact which should be borne in mind in all consideration of Christian doctrine, and it is especially necessary in relation to the subject before us, where the tendency of modern thought is to lay stress on the truth contained in the first part of the text—"God was in Christ"—and to be neglectful of that which follows upon it as its necessary result.

"God was in Christ." The words raise the whole question of God's revelation of Himself to man in the past, the present and the future. They refer, no doubt, to a definite historical fact, but a fact of such tremendous importance that it cannot be left to stand alone or be studied in isolation. Theological truths are not like those dangerous chemical substances which can only be examined with safety in a vacuum. And the Incarnation can only be intelligently grasped as we regard it in its place in the long line of God's revelations. Devout readers of the Old Testament cannot fail to understand the hints

and suggestions which are there thrown out of God's progressive unveiling of Himself before the eyes of men. It is a process which is not confined to Israel, but extends over the whole arena of human history. It is a process which, interpreted in terms of modern thought, may best be described as one of spiritual evolution. For it is certain that if we accept the hypothesis of evolution at all we cannot confine it to the physical sphere, but must suffer it to throw its wonderful light on the moral and spiritual life of man. Only in this way can we escape that common and fruitful error which would regard the Incarnation as a break in the continuity of the Universe, a sudden and unwarrantable interference, an afterthought of the divine love. Indeed, it would be well if that word interference, in the sense of sudden, inexplicable, and unpremeditated action, could be wiped out of our theological vocabulary. It can only lead to misunderstanding and unbelief. God's action is normal and natural in that He never ceases to act, and in His action to reveal Himself. It is not that

now and again He breaks out and has periods of activity like a volcano, and then sinks back into quiescence. If there is a difference at all, it is in our perceptions of His working, so that at certain times we seem to see Him and to hear His voice more clearly than at others.

But we must beware lest we seek to impose the limitations of our thought upon God. We are, for instance, often dangerously near saying that He works sometimes in a sacred and sometimes in a secular way. We say Lo! here and Lo! there, as though it were in our power to shut Him up in temples made with hands. Surely the most devout as well as the wisest thing is to admit at once that the whole history of the universe is a continuous revelation of God. It passes through various stages, and reaches the highest plane in Jesus Christ. Thence it still goes forward and is perpetuated by the Holy Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto man. What the next stage will be it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. All



we know is that it will be higher than the last. The coming of God in Christ to dwell with the children of men was in the fullness of the times. All investigations into the history of the times immediately preceding and following the birth of Jesus show how marvellously a place was made for Him, and how He fitted into the place that had been made. Just as we find in the physical world that an organism is prepared by slow microcosmic stages for the performance of some higher function and entrance into some higher plane of being, so men had by the word of God been prepared for the new and higher spiritual possibilities which were to be made actual in Jesus Christ. The word became flesh when the world was capable of receiving the message which the Incarnation involved. In Christ man became created anew, for he then entered into the larger inheritance which had been prepared for him, and which he was of an age to receive. That he did not enter upon it fully and at once was but of a piece with all God's action in the past.



It has taken long ages of slow development for the *genus homo* to reach the status of a civilised, healthy, cultured, God-fearing man. But all that was possible once the advance was made from brute to human, from irrational to rational, from instinctive to conscious life. "Oh the little more, and how much it is!" The whole future of man, with all its highest possibilities, was involved in the fact of his being. So, too, it may be by a long process that men and women rise to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. But even that is possible once Christ has come. And that "God was in Christ" marks the beginning of that great stage in human development whose end will show in a like manner and degree God in man.

2. With this brief comment we must now leave the fact of the Incarnation, and turn for a moment to its purpose. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." As has been said already, these two things are intimately bound up together, and cannot be kept apart. It is necessary to study the Incarnation

in its relations to the whole process of God's revelation to man in order that its redemptive purpose may shine out most clearly and most triumphantly. Here, as always, it is true that the end crowns the work. God's revelation is not to mere curiosity. It has a meaning, and it is the very savour of a new and larger life to those that have eyes to see.

“Reconciling the world unto Himself.” Then the world needed to be reconciled. It was estranged, alienated from God. It is so still, though the fact is not always acknowledged. And if it is so, why? Why the need for reconciliation? How did it come about, it is often objected, that God so mismanaged affairs that men did not know Him and serve Him instinctively and needed to be reconciled? These are some of the difficulties that the very use of the word “reconciliation” raises. Here again we are driven to go behind the scenes, and speak about the ways of God to man, speak in language that seems very presumptuous, but is sometimes necessary if we are to give a reason for the

faith that is in us. God's action is uniform as well as progressive. He works according to law, and does not force Himself upon His creatures unduly. He has given them minds and wills of their own, and these they must use after their kind. For example, parental authority is a good thing, but when it dominates the will of a child, crushes its originality and initiative, and forces it into a fixed groove, it is authority cruelly and wickedly abused. And the God we know is the Father of all mankind. It is of the essence of His Fatherhood and the fixed purpose of His love to leave His children free. The necessary result of their freedom is a certain false independence and alienation from God. There is that in the natural man that sets him at variance with God. He is afar off and needs to be made nigh, estranged and must become reconciled. Thus the reconciliation in question is chiefly on the side of man, not of God. It becomes necessary through misunderstanding, the dulling of man's conscience and the hardening of his heart, not through God's anger or resentment.

It is, in other words, we who are alienated from God, and not God who is alienated from us.

This latter view has sometimes been strongly held in the sense that the work of Jesus Christ was to mollify the divine wrath against the sinner. There is this much truth in it—that God's hatred of sin is a very terrible reality, and that in every forgiveness of sin there is a divine justice to be vindicated as well as a divine mercy to be satisfied. And it is the fact that it has this double function to perform which makes the reconciling work of Jesus so stupendous a task. But in its essence it is the bringing nigh of those who are afar off, whose estrangement is the result of their own wilful blindness and sin. The matter was never stated more simply and luminously than in the great parable of the prodigal son. There we have sin in its essence—a fatal independence which leads to misunderstanding and alienation. Does any one suppose that, if the young man had been living with his father on the proper terms—of mutual trust and

filial obedience—he would ever have asked to have his goods divided unto him, and taken his journey into the far country? His leaving home just meant that it was no longer home to him, and was the result of a process of estrangement which had long been going on. So in the history of the race sin is independence of God. It has many forms, and manifests itself openly in a variety of ways. But in essence it is rebellion against God, impatience of His control, determination to be one's own master and to go one's own way. So in another than the merely etymological sense sin is a missing of the mark. Man thereby renounces his natural condition of dependence on the Author of his being, and seeks to live in an impossible self-sufficiency. He breaks the course of his true development, and enters upon what must be a perpetual state of contradiction, becoming a law unto himself. Thus sin may also be described as a disease—an unnatural and an unhealthy state that involves ceaseless and unavailing struggle. For this there can be no remedy save one which goes



to the root of the mischief, and seeks to restore man once again to true and natural relations with God. This conclusion is confirmed not only by the history of revelation, but by man's own efforts to retrieve his position for himself.

3. We may say, in a word, that the supreme purpose of pre-Christian revelation is to vindicate the majesty of God's law and prove man to be a transgressor. But a very little study of this revelation serves to bring out its great educational purpose. The law is ever a schoolmaster. It does not exist for its own sake, nor is it an end in itself. It is the outcome of God's love and pity for the weakness of man; it serves to vindicate His righteousness and to bring transgressors to a better mind. God's moral law, for example, really means this—that the universe is so constituted that for men to live in selfishness and in violation of right is to miss the main purpose of their being, and to deprive themselves of that perfection which is their due. But even allowing for this, all the history of revelation shows that the law is insufficient



for the redemptive purpose of God. It was this, among other things, that Jesus meant when He said that He came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. The old dispensation was not to pass away utterly : it had done its work, and was to be merged in the new. Like the new, it was of God and had served His purposes, and was to be fulfilled in something higher and better. The new law in Jesus Christ was a means of grace such as the old could never be, because it lifted man at once on to a higher plane in his relation with God. And it was made necessary not only by the insufficiency of the old order, but by the blunders and impotence of man. While we believe profoundly that man was made in God's image and has in him the spark of the divine, we cannot but believe also in what theologians call his depravity. There is almost a perverse ingenuity in the way in which man has fallen short of his opportunities and wilfully turned light into darkness. The history of revelation, while on one side it is the story of God's love and willingness to save, is on the other a

dismal tale of man's hostility to God and peevish aversion from His will.

Taking the record of God's word in the Bible alone, if there were no deeper cause we should count it crass stupidity which made men so blind to His appearing and so deaf to His word. In face of some of His grandest manifestations the complaint holds, "My people will not know, neither will they consider." And in the larger light of to-day the same thing is true. The chief trouble about the gospel of God's love is that men will not receive it. Their hearts are hardened against it and their wills estranged. They suffer themselves to be led by their own devices and imaginations rather than by the word of the truth of God. They see Him, not as He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, but as He is pictured by their own fears. The God of wrath whom even Christian people fear is not the Father who was manifest in the Son, but some shadowy ghost conjured up by their own evil consciences. And if this is so sometimes even in the broad daylight of Christianity, we may very well conceive

what it must have been in the twilight of Hebrew faith or in the black night of paganism. Just as the diseased brain of a sick man will sometimes count his nearest and dearest to be his bitterest foes, so the sin-ridden heart of the world distorts the revealed image of God, rears false barriers between itself and Him, and keeps Him afar off when He would fain draw nigh.

And therefore it is that the work of God in Jesus Christ in its most fundamental aspect is to be described as a reconciliation. God was in Christ that He might draw near to our humanity, and so carry out His long-cherished purposes concerning us. This was no afterthought of revelation. It was the fulfilment of an age-long plan, that had waited till its time was prepared. God in Christ reveals man to Himself, and this was the beginning of reconciliation. To bring together two estranged friends it is necessary to abolish all misunderstanding. And man's chief misunderstanding is of himself. This is what our fathers used to call pride. We think we are better than we really are; we shirk the true facts of

the case ; we will not believe in the sinfulness of sin ; we love to be independent, and to work out our own salvation. There is a wonderful dignity in God's revelation of man. It is true that " the Word became human that we might become divine." But there is no room for misunderstanding here. It is a possible rather than an actual state which God reveals. In Christ every true man of us sees first how far short he falls and receives the gift of a contrite spirit and a broken heart ; and this, and this alone, opens the way to a new life in Christ and to living union with Him.

Immortal love, for ever full, for ever flowing free,  
 For ever shared, for ever whole, a never-ebbing sea ;  
 Blow, winds of God, awake and blow the mists of earth  
     away,  
 Shine out, O light divine, and show how wide and far  
     we stray.

Again, God was in Christ revealing Himself—His love triumphant and His righteousness vindicated, and so reconciling the world unto Himself. It was a true instinct of the human heart which had always refused to believe that God was mere gentleness, and would forgive men out of

the weakness of His compassion. Even when the human conscience was most dead and the sense of sin least keen, the fact of sin remained, an impassable barrier between man and God. It was, again, an instinct that sin must somehow be conquered—the serpent's head bruised—before men could have peace with God. In the olden days men conceived that this was their task; and how they strove to accomplish it! What sighs and tears, prayers and sacrifices, have gone to the pulling down of the strong wall of partition! And God was in Christ that men might realise that the work was His and not theirs. It was so that He fulfilled the purpose of His grace, which was that none should perish but all have everlasting life. In Christ the loving-kindness which is eternal in God is revealed not as mere universal benevolence, but as fulfilling the divine purpose of righteousness for man. He came to save men from their sins, and so restore them to that conformity with the law of love which sin had broken.

And so His appeal to them is to see Him as He is. They have only to know Him



in order to become reconciled and to put away their fears. And the knowledge is to be one not of hearsay alone, but of actual experience. This is the difference between the new revelation and the old—God *was* in Christ, and did not merely send His word through a prophet. He gave Himself that in Him men might have life. The appeal is at once most pathetic and most powerful. There is no longer room for misunderstanding. It is all of free grace on the side of God—a willing and absolute devotion of Himself to the interests of His sinful creatures. “The Divine patience loves on through all enmity, and though perfect love meeting sin must become wrath—which is consistent with itself—it never becomes hatred, which is its own opposite.”





HE MUST NEEDS SUFFER

Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things,  
and to enter into his glory ?—LUKE xxiv. 26.

## VII

### HE MUST NEEDS SUFFER

THERE is more in this conversation on the road to Emmaus than at first meets the eye. Cleopas and his friend may well be taken as types, and while they speak for themselves they speak also for multitudes of men and women since their day. They had shared the opinion of many other Jews in their time that Jesus of Nazareth might be the Messiah. They had at least hoped that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel, and the news of His trial, condemnation, and death had come upon them as a shock. Their hopes were dashed to the ground. They could no longer believe in Jesus as the Christ. The cross was an offence to them. And it is an offence that never ceases. The mystery of the sacrifice of Jesus continually blinds men's

eyes. The secret of the salvation which is in Jesus is continually evading us—we find it hard to conform our ideas to God's. Like the Jews of old, we would have a saviour after our own pattern, and we must be able to measure him by our own standards or he can be nothing to us. The life and death of Jesus Christ, with all the mystery that surrounds them, with their strange contradiction of our preconceived notions, with their apparent injustice, failure and defeat, are too hard for us—we cannot away with them. And as we look upon it all we are often conscious of the same baffled sense of chagrin that these men were made to feel as they talked with Jesus by the way. And His answer to us is the same as it was to them—"Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?" If they had only understood it, this was the very fate foretold for the Messiah. And is there not a divine fitness in it all? Are not the transcendental achievement and the joy unspeakable worth the price of the cross and the shame? If we could

but learn to see as God sees, should we not say of this His greatest work, as of all others, "He doeth all things well"?

Here, then, is the question before us, not a riddle for our solution, but a deep and solemn challenge to our better selves, a call to believe in the absolute fitness and justice of God's way with men in Jesus Christ His Son—Was there not a moral obligation upon Him to suffer? And we must accept the challenge. We must not put the question on one side as a thing too high for us. It is not enough for us after all to say that we rest in the accomplished work of Jesus Christ, and do not seek to understand and explain it. A Christ who is a mere anomaly, a riddle to our minds, will never be the true Lord of our hearts; and though we cannot, while the veil of the flesh is before our eyes, penetrate to the full the secret of His life and death, we can at least seek to have in us so much of His mind as that we shall be able to discern the supreme fitness in His work, the righteousness of His salvation, and to answer, as with an everlasting "Yea," the question,



“Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory ? ”

And in order fairly to discuss the question we must be quite clear as to what it was that Jesus Christ came into the world to do. Students of mankind tell us that, roughly speaking, three stages may be distinguished in the history of human progress : (1) the stage of barbarism, when the body is cultivated ; (2) the stage of civilisation, when the mind is cultivated ; (3) the stage of religion, when the soul is cultivated. Now, the coming of Jesus marks the dominance of this last stage. He has to do with the soul first, and opens to men that larger life which we call spiritual. True, He profoundly affects the physical and intellectual life, and His teaching has its social and moral aspects ; but that is because He goes first to the root of the matter, and touches man at the core and centre of his being. As we often say, He introduced man to a loftier estimate of himself than any which he had conceived before. He met with him on a higher level, and valued him at a higher price.

This has become a commonplace with us, but we must not forget the startling revolution that it meant when the idea was first put forth.

And the work of Jesus with the human soul was not merely to educate, but to save it. To Him man is more than a creature in an imperfect state of development—he is a bond-slave tied hand and foot by sin. And this conception dominated His whole attitude to the world. If you would help a prisoner, you do not merely go to him in his cell and say: “Friend, I come to teach you, to educate you; here are books, games, cunning devices to pass the time.” What he wants is not to have his captivity made more tolerable, but to be set free. And it is a sign of the subtle psychological insight of Jesus Christ, and of His deep knowledge of human nature, that His battle-cries on earth were not those of ordinary teachers and reformers, but words like repentance, ransom, and redemption. If we are content to take Him at His word, and to share His conception of the task that lay before Him,

we shall know that He could not have come as a radiant angel or messenger of joy ; but that the stern warfare He had to wage demanded another guise, demanded that He should be straitened until it was accomplished. To Himself the secret of His whole career lay in the words, " Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory ? "

Now, the necessity thus laid on Jesus Christ has been the familiar theme of theologians from the earliest days of the Christian Church until now. It has been so fully admitted in Christian experience that the attempt to account for it has been both natural and inevitable ; though it is no wonder that men have been more satisfied with the saving benefits of this truth than with the authorised explanations of it. For Jesus always addresses Himself in the first instance not, as it were, to the head but to the heart. In the past the most successful attempts to explain the necessity for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ have been those which have treated it as a matter of legal right and obligation.

Under this aspect the truth has often taken powerful hold of the minds of Christians and has proved effective in their experience. The fruit of it has been a stern and rigid system of belief and mode of conduct, that has often acted like healthy leaven in society, and proved those who held the doctrine to be the salt of the earth. And even now we cannot but acknowledge the essential truth and fitness of this position, though the forensic language in which it has been clothed is to our ears pedantic and unreal. What men need to do to-day is still to accept the moral and judicial necessity for the sufferings and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but no longer to express it in legal phraseology, but in terms of the spiritual life.

In seeking to do this, let us look at the sufferings of Jesus, (1) in the light of His relation to men. There is no name more characteristic of Him, and none which He Himself more frequently used, than the title "Son of Man." Jesus never anywhere explains this name, but as we study sympathetically His use of it we cannot miss

the deep undercurrent of its meaning. It signifies His solidarity with the race, and it gives to His humanity a representative and, if you will, a vicarious character. But there is more in it than this. It means that He stood frankly for the human race, and identified Himself with outraged human interests. His relation with men was not in any sense official, but one of simple human fellowship. And the aim of this fellowship was apparent. It was that He might raise men to His own level, lift them above the miserable contradictions of the flesh and the spirit, change the discord of their being into harmony, and help them to share His nature and His life.

So it was as the Son of Man that He shared the lot of the outcast and had not where to lay His head; as Son of Man that He had power on earth to forgive sins; as Son of Man that He came to seek and to save that which was lost; and as Son of Man that He must suffer many things. And this suffering was inevitable from the nature and purpose of His fellowship with man. It was morally necessary



to the fulfilment of His own idea of the work He came to do. There could have been no real fellowship between Him and us save as He became the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." As we read the story of His life we see how the first tragic note of it is struck by His persistent championship of the outcast and the forlorn. It was for this that He was proclaimed as a wine-bibber and a glutton, a friend of publicans and sinners. He let His pity have free play on the Sabbath, and He was hated as a Sabbath-breaker. He spake words of forgiveness and peace to a stricken soul, and the men around Him said it was blasphemy. He pitied the demoniac and touched him into a new and saner life, and He was charged with being an ally of the Evil One. He had to endure the most grievous contradiction of sinners, because He would not see with their evil eyes, and regard publicans and harlots with moral aversion and set them outside the pale of humanity. As the Son of Man Jesus set before the world a lofty and still unattained ideal. His life gave practical expression



to a doctrine of humanity such as few philanthropists have ever reached. He made it possible for every sufferer to say :

This fleshly robe the Lord did wear :

This watch the Lord did keep :

These burdens sore the Lord did bear :

These tears the Lord did weep.

And because He suffered He was forced by the folly and prejudice of the day to share the lot of those for whom and with whom He stood.

But (2) this involves a further aspect of His relation with mankind, which was not merely one of fellowship but of sympathy. It was not only that He shared our nature, and was in a very real sense typical of the race, but that He was so consciously. The burden of our woes and needs weighed heavily on Him—He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. There is nothing more remarkable or more beautiful than the spontaneous outflow of pity revealed in His ministry on earth. And this arose not out of any formal association with our human lot, but out of the love He bore us, which was so free and natural

that it must find expression. And such sympathy as this necessarily involves suffering. Even of us it is true that "no man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself." The bond that binds us is so close and intimate that almost involuntarily we weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice. The nearer our association with men the closer is our fellow-feeling. And when we realise the sense of a unique relationship with mankind which lay upon Jesus, sometimes as a burden, sometimes as a holy joy, and when we add to this His nature sensitive beyond the common and quick to know what was in man, we may well believe that the spectacle of human sin and misery which met Him at every turn here on earth made no small part of the cup of bitterness He had to drink.

It may be that this formed only part of His suffering, and that it did not necessarily exhaust His love; but we shall never realise what that love involved until we see that it was sympathy with human woes and needs which led Christ to share them.

For we cannot read the Gospels carefully without understanding that there is indicated in them a certain unknown, mysterious element in His sufferings. Apart from the last agony His lot was not a specially hard one. True, He was despised and rejected of those He came to save, and He knew the meaning of poverty and toil. But in this experience there was nothing unique, nothing to account for the burden that He evidently bore. This arose—partly, at least—from His sense of oneness with men and from the grave responsibility which that involved. To Him it meant, from the first, sacrifice. He could never escape the sound of human sorrow. To Him it was something essential; He was by His very nature and the necessities of the case the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And so, feeling with men as He did, it behoved Him to suffer. There is no mystery more sacred than that of His grief over fallen men. True, His love never failed, and the vision of His faith was always clear. He could trust in the will of God, and know that none should

pluck out of His hand the sheep His Father gave Him. But for all that He wept over Jerusalem, and spoke words of woe to Chorazin and Bethsaida, and mourned over the helpless multitudes of Galilee. For all that, too, He knew that the good shepherd must give His life for the sheep. He watched the clouds of hatred and misunderstanding gather round Him with an unaccountable dread, and when He saw the blow about to fall His whole nature went out in the cry: "Father, let this cup pass, nevertheless not My will be done, but Thine." It behoved Him to suffer.

3. But there was more in His suffering than this. It was not only the outcome of His sympathy and of His voluntary entanglement with the life and lot of man. Had this been all, His woes and death would never have been described in terms of the altar and the sacrifice. The moral necessity laid on Jesus Christ cut deeper than this. If there is any meaning in words we have His own testimony for so saying; and we are bound to ask further, What was

the work, and what were the conditions which made this submission to suffering necessary? What more was behind it than a mere moral impression and the sacrifice of a natural love? We can gather some hint of the answer to the question from the words "and to enter into His glory." Suffering was the necessary condition of the complete fulfilment of His life-task and of receiving His reward. We must surely write the reward of Jesus in large letters. It was no mere matter of self-realisation, no being "carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease"—it was the winning of salvation for others, the seeing of the travail of the soul and so being satisfied. He was not content until He should have finished the work of saving men from their sins. This was what He came to do, and it was for doing this that He needs must suffer.

Now we must ask ourselves here to look at the whole matter as with the eyes of Christ, from the standpoint of the love of God. On the basis of a merely rational view of life and the world, all this talk



about the sufferings of Jesus and their efficacy for salvation is meaningless. But once you grant even in a meagre way the spiritual premises, you cannot stop short of the full conclusion indicated here. As was said at the beginning, Jesus deals with man as a spiritual being, and one effect of this is that He makes His appeal not primarily to the intellectual faculties, but to the conscience—*i.e.* to man's moral consciousness. Now, in the history of the race, wherever man has been morally and intellectually alive, conscience has asserted its sway. It has made sin real to men, and has brought home to them the sense of guilt. We are familiar with the evidence for this both on the positive and the negative sides. We see it in the universal reverence for martyrs, who have died in defence of what they believed to be right and true. We see it in the shapeless terrors of the wicked, "the fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation." The common sense of mankind agrees in giving over the evil to punishment. Children, it has been said, "always rejoice at the overthrow of



Pharaoh and the punishment of Haman." Even the pit of a theatre loves to see virtue rewarded and vice condemned, because it satisfies some hidden instinct, some inarticulate sense of the fitness of things. And when we concentrate our view, and watch the operation of conscience in the individual, the same phenomena appear intensified. We all know the sense of misery that comes with the consciousness of evil. Explain it how we will, in the long run it speaks of guilt, shame, restlessness, unsatisfied desire for we know not what of holiness and peace. Watch the effect of this again in the history of religion, and you find that it dominates its whole outward manifestation.

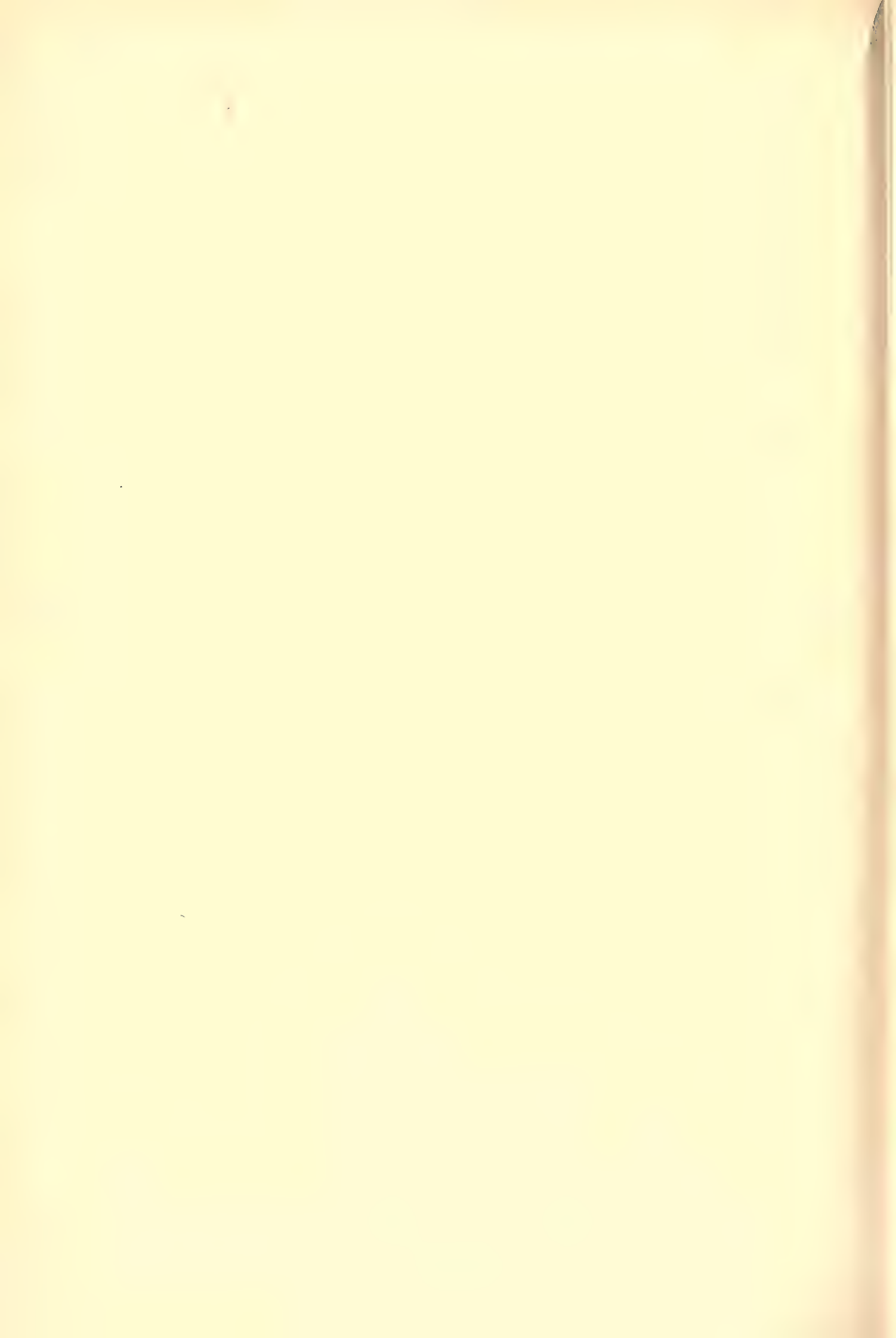
The great mass of the religious ceremonies of the world have had for their object the quieting of conscience, the winning by some strange device of that peace and pardon for which the instinct of man has ever told him no price was too great to pay. The ritual and sacrifice which play so large a part in all the religions of the world simply shadow forth the long-drawn

agony of the human conscience, the passionate desire to escape the stain and consequences of sin. Now, in speaking of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we generally seek to explain it from the side of God. It is the outcome of God's grace ; He willed it so ; it was the work of His good pleasure. That is true, but there is another side to the picture. We must not forget that it is demanded also by the conscience of man. The " needs must " in the suffering of Jesus means that nothing short of this could satisfy the clamant needs of man's moral and spiritual nature. Given a real and keen sense of sin, and man knows that forgiveness is no child's play. To say that God forgives weakly, as one who would hush the matter up and say no more about it, is to attribute to Him what has been called the " asses' milk of human kindness." In our heart of hearts we have nothing but contempt for action such as this, and, what is more, we know that it does not and cannot satisfy our need. Conscience is, above all things, inexorably just. It is a commonplace to say that men will always

be more severe with themselves than they are with one another. We pay no small tribute to the real grandeur of our human nature when we say that a man who is in his right mind will never receive forgiveness and the remission of his fault till full restitution has been made. And for all we may say to the contrary, man feels this most keenly where God is concerned. He is not content to think that his forgiveness comes spontaneously when he has paid his price, or made his prayer, as though the universe were an automatic machine. And the one difference between Christianity and all other religions is, that while they make man pay the whole price for his wrongdoing, in Christianity the price is paid by God.

In the past man has made almost superhuman efforts to atone for wrong done and guilt incurred. He has not even hesitated to give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. And for all that he has not won peace, and the story of his struggle for it is a long wail of despair. Now, he has still to pay. The consequences of sin are not

to be escaped ; it can still wreck bodies and blight lives, and wreak ineffaceable mischief, but it need not kill the soul. The last agony of it is removed, and the crushing sense of guilt, the burden of conscience, the quenching of hope, once inevitable, are no longer necessary. The reason for this is not that man's quest has succeeded at last, but that God has taken His place and achieved the impossible for him. And this again completes the answer to the question : " Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory ? "



CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS



For I delivered unto you first of all that which  
I also received, how that Christ died for our sins  
according to the Scriptures.—1 COR. xv. 3.

## VIII

### CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS

THAT Christ died for the sins of men is one of the central truths of the Christian religion. That He freely sacrificed Himself in order that the grace of God might abound unto all His rebellious children is most sincerely believed by all those who have entered into the inner sanctuary of the faith. Here Christianity stands in line with the great religions of the world, and shows the power it possesses to satisfy the deepest instincts of the race. That there should be sacrifice for sin is one of the most primitive demands of the human conscience. There is no more interesting study than to see how in various ways from the beginning of time men have sought to find satisfaction for this demand. The demand is a perfectly lawful one. We may try to reason it away, but it starts up again,

and forces itself upon our attention the more we come face to face with the great fact of sin. Sin eternally requires atonement, and the claim of Christianity is to satisfy this requirement, not from the side of man but of God. In Jesus Christ men are taught that they are no longer required to make sacrifice for sin, to pile up their penances and pay the allotted price. The great work has been done, and done by the freewill offering of the Son of God. In Him the way of pardon and peace is opened, and the guilty soul has but to ask and it shall receive, to seek and it shall find. Thus it is natural and inevitable that wherever Christianity is accepted there animal sacrifices cease.

One of the outstanding features in the religious history of man from the beginning has been the effort—the frantic, almost despairing effort—to escape from the punishment and the consequences of sin. It is this which has moved men to strange fantastic rites, to self-torture and immolation, to rude severing of the dearest ties, to the loss of all they

held most precious. It is this that has sounded that low, sad note which runs through all the pagan creeds, and which leaves even the best of them void of hope and empty of true joy. And it is this which gives its full glory and wonder to the Christian faith. In Christ the long yearning of the race finds answer, the effort to cast away the crushing burden of sin is brought to an end. The work which man has failed to do is seen finally accomplished in God. Men are no longer constrained by the terrors of the law, but by the goodness of God they are led to repentance. The old enmity is put away, and they have peace with God through Jesus Christ. God commendeth His love toward them, in that while they were yet sinners, and not when they had become perfect, Christ died for them. The grand truth is proclaimed that the sacrifice which they owed God has made. "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

And this is the message for our salvation. Wherever there has been deep consciousness of sin and true contrition for the same, it

has been accepted as such. The glory of the Christian gospel is that it brings peace and happiness to men. And that it does so lies in the central fact of the Atonement of the blood of Christ. Here is the root of the whole matter. In this fact is the pith and substance of the Christian faith. Many of those who cannot explain the fact, and have no adequate theory of it, are yet content to rest in its results, and shelter themselves in the great calm which it sheds over their troubled souls. That Christ died for our sins has been the charter of freedom to those in bondage, and has shed the light of a new day on the darkest night. The fact of the Atonement and its value for the sons of men are most fully verified in the experience of Christendom. It has wrought with strange power in the heart of simple, conscience-stricken men from the days of Augustine until now. Wherever religion has been truly alive it has been in proportion to the intensity and vividness of the conviction that Christ died for sin. Millions of poor and obscure men and women have been lifted into a glory of

triumphant faith and into something akin to heroism by the force of this belief. It is acknowledged to-day by a great cloud of witnesses—all the multitudes of those who meet round the table of the Lord and with deep glad earnestness proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. The very corruptions of Christianity give the same testimony. Many of them spring simply from the desire of men to bring home to their hearts in some more actual and tangible fashion the fact of the sacrifice and the priestly office of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this great fact does not only live in the sanctified imaginations of men ; it is part—and the chief part—of their living Christian experience. In virtue of it they venture to approach the throne of grace, and seek to live God's life in the world. It is to them the very bread of life, feeding their souls on hope. It cannot readily be explained and put into words, but the experience of it is one of the great verities, and the joy and peace it brings no tongue can tell. By the sacrifice of His love is God brought nigh unto the world, and the barrier of sin



is overstepped. We still mourn for the evil that is in us, and are conscious of failure and ill-desert, but in the knowledge of Christ's sacrifice we are lifted up above sorrow and despair. We are brought near to God with a deep and abiding trust; we have the power to seek the divine mercy and to wait patiently for the Lord. We are fain to confess that all the joy, the strength, the peace, and the glory of our Christian experience spring out of the knowledge that in Jesus Christ we have propitiation for our sins, and not our sins only but the sins of the whole world.

But if the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ is a fact verified in the experience of men, it is also a mystery. And there is no doubt that the tendency of most of us is to make more of the mystery than of the fact. It is only fair to point out, however, that this cloud of mystery which seems so impenetrable arises rather out of the explanations which men have given than out of the fact itself. That Christ has died for our sins, and that through His sacrifice we have free forgiveness, peace,

and acceptance with God, has been acknowledged, by multitudes of men of every degree of intelligence and civilisation, as the one truth which makes life worth living and the future full of hope. But the question why this is so, is inevitable, and the answers to this question many a one has found a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The answers that have been given to it are many and various. It must be remembered that the fact of the Atonement is one, but the theories of the Atonement are many. It is quite possible for a man to accept the fact and to live in the light of it without having any very coherent theory to give. There is truth in all the theories, but the whole truth is not in any nor in the whole sum of them. We are not saved by the theory but by the fact, and whatever theory a man may hold he cannot be condemned for that alone. It is only his life, his experience, that tells.

Then ought we to leave the theories alone and consign them to some limbo of oblivion? Not altogether. Consciously or unconsciously men will seek to speculate

on Christian truth, to formulate to themselves the principles on which their experience is founded. And the effort is natural and healthy; we cannot and must not stifle it. Then must we seek to fashion for ourselves some cut-and-dried theory of the Atonement, and pin our faith unalterably to that? God forbid, for in so doing we shall be in danger of substituting theory for living experience. And that constitutes a snare in which many a Christian is fatally entangled. A man is no more saved by his theory of salvation than he can feed his body with a treatise on health. In the New Testament we have the fact of the Atonement stated, and but little more. But the statement is so wide, so many-sided, so richly illustrated, that on the basis of the New Testament alone various and even contradictory theories of the Atonement have been built up. The mandate of the New Testament to the preacher is to preach that Christ died for the ungodly, and to the Christian to receive that message, and with it pardon and peace. But to the natural man the message is a mystery and

a stumbling-block ; and so the effort has been made to explain it, to make clear to the intelligence what appeals rather to the heart—to give a theory of the Atonement. It is open to any one to say that this effort to explain has rather increased the difficulties of the matter. But be that as it may, we cannot avoid the difficulties of the matter, even though they are felt by others rather than by ourselves. We are bound to raise them and to face them. And one great debt that we owe to the many-sided thought of theologians on this great subject of the Atonement is that they have enabled us to realise its difficulties, and in some measure at least to withstand them. The theories, however, are neither to be wilfully ignored nor blindly accepted ; they are rather to be used. They may all help us to a clearer statement of the reason for the hope that is in us, and to a closer grip of that great truth wherein we stand.

Let us, therefore, try and deal with some of these objections to the doctrine of the Atonement, which the experience of cen-

turies has revealed, and which are still powerful among men to-day. Far too much has been made of the difficulty and mystery of the subject, and therefore many people are blind to the light of it and unconscious of its power because they see it through a distorted medium. It may be quite correct to say that the intellectual difficulty should be no bar to the practical acceptance of the truth. But that is just what men do not and cannot see. And it is at least the business of the preacher to show that the mystery does not always lie where men seem to see it, and by seeking to remove the obstacles to prepare the way of the Lord and to make His paths straight. In saying this we are simply following a line of argument made familiar to Christian thinkers by Dr. Dale, to whose devout and masterly treatment of this doctrine theologians owe a debt they will not easily repay.

The first difficulty which the scriptural statement of the doctrine raises in the minds of men is a very simple and natural one, and brings us face to face with the whole question. They say, Why should



Christ have died in order that God may forgive our sins? Is He not our Father, and does not an earthly father forgive his children without requiring any sacrifice, any atonement, in order that he may forgive? Are men, then, more merciful? Now, the fallacy here lies in making the moral relations between man and God identical with the moral relations between man and man. If these relations are identical, then there is no room in reason for an Atonement. But are they identical? As a matter of fact they are wholly and absolutely different, and it is on this difference that the whole question depends. True, God is our Father, and we are His children; but He is more. He is both Judge and King, and His righteousness is as perfect as His love. He possesses powers and prerogatives which no earthly father can possess, and therefore our relation to Him is at once more complex and higher than that to any earthly father. And even our fathers according to the flesh are not able to pass over the sins of their children and deal with them as though they had never



been. The claims of justice must be vindicated as well as those of love. If a child commits a sin which is also a crime according to the law of the land, and the father should hush it up and forgive the child, he would but show his weakness, and in the eyes of the law become a sharer in the offence. The law must take its course, and a father's love is best shown in not shrinking from the penalty which the child has incurred. But God, beside being the Father of men, is the representative and defender of the law of righteousness. And the sin which wounds the Father's love also transgresses the law. The law must be upheld, and the sin must be punished. Love requires no less.

But to come back again to our analogy of the human father and his criminal son. Suppose the sentence of the judge for his crime is the payment of a heavy fine, or the alternative of a long imprisonment. Now is the opportunity of the father's love. He will offer to pay the fine for his child even though it be his last penny, and the child goes free by reason of the sacrifice. And

shall God do less than this? Imperfect as the illustration is, it helps us to understand how even in the dealings of an earthly father with his children we have no more than a dim foreshadowing of that divine love which has been made known to the world in Jesus Christ. That the Son of God should take upon Himself the burden of our transgressions, that He should live as a man among men and die for the men He loved, is but the most sublime and transcendental manifestation of a spirit of sacrifice which even weak men and women show, and which they recognise to be natural and right. And if we are to argue on this matter at all it must be on the basis of acknowledging that God is to us not merely as we are to one another, but that our human relationships can only dimly and feebly represent the relation of the Eternal Father to the creatures He has made. To say that God must act just as we do, and in no other way, and to tie Him down to the commonplace level of our little lives, is almost to reason Him out of existence. That the message of His love

in Christ should transcend our experience is the most natural thing in the world; that He should uphold the law of righteousness at every cost, even at the price of a sacrifice like that of Christ, is worthy of the Judge of all the earth. And we shall do wisely not to cavil either at His justice or His mercy, but freely and humbly accept the offer of His grace, knowing that His ways are not our ways, nor are His thoughts ours.

But there is yet another flaw in the objection raised against the doctrine of the Atonement from human analogies. When it is said that we do not ask for any sacrifice before we forgive those who sin against us, the argument supposes that our forgiveness is the same as that of God, whereas the difference between them is radical. Men may forgive a sinner, but they do not and cannot forgive sin. When any one has sinned against us we may put away personal pique and resentment and treat him as though nothing had happened to come between us, but we can do no more, and in doing so much we by no means

forgive his sin. The sin remains, and though we no longer suffer it to influence our conduct towards our friend, he has not got rid of it. It is still a burden on his conscience and a blight upon his life, and it may be that in the light of forgiveness he feels it more heavily and sorrows for it more bitterly than he has ever done. Whereas in the forgiveness of God it is the sin itself that is done away. The burden is lifted from the life, the conscience is cleansed, the transgression is removed. The debt which has been for years a cloud upon the man's life is suddenly wiped out, and he is once more free. The past cannot be changed; the evil remains and its consequences run their course, but the sense of guilt is obliterated. The man no longer feels himself under condemnation; his sin is banned, but he himself is free. It is not merely that God's personal sorrow and resentment against evil are removed, and he no longer lies under the cloud of the divine displeasure. He receives a larger and more generous mercy than this implies—a remission of his sin such as no human

love can grant. The forgiveness of God is equal to the forgiveness of man, but it also infinitely transcends it. And for that reason, if for no other, we may safely argue that it requires more on God's part than is ever dreamt of by man—a depth of earnestness and a sublimity of sacrifice such as it hath not entered the heart of man to conceive.

But, once more, it is said that in the sacrifice of Christ the innocent suffers for the guilty, and that that is unjust and unworthy of a righteous God. If that be true, then indeed the whole universe is awry, and there is no such thing as justice. That the innocent suffer for the guilty is one of the most common experiences of the race. It represents a law which runs through the whole animal creation as we know it, and it gives the opportunity for some of the most generous and lofty forms of human heroism. Self-sacrifice seems to be a part, and a necessary part, of every effort that men can put forth to ameliorate their kind, to rescue their fellows from the just consequences of their folly and sin. Strange and mysterious as this seems, there



is a principle here the validity and greatness of which are recognised by all good men, and the opportunity to suffer for the sake of others is seized on by noble natures as that in which they find the truest and highest development of their being. The brightest spots in the history of mankind are those which have been hallowed by sacrifice. And can we deny to God that which in man is supremely good and beautiful? If a mother may sacrifice herself for her child, the wife for her husband or the husband for his wife, may not God give of His own life for the children of His love? There is no injustice here, but a supreme revelation of grace; and whenever men have felt their need of divine help it has come to them as a light out of the darkness and as a message of salvation indeed. That this sacrifice should be greater than any ever endured or dreamed of by man is only right and proper, as the divine is greater than the human. In the magnitude and glory of the sacrifice of the Son of Man we need find no root of objection, but simply a message of grace which is



sufficient for our need, a living testimony that we may have joy by His sorrow and life by His death.

But, in conclusion, there is one necessary condition to a full and free acceptance of God's grace in Jesus Christ—viz. the sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the consciousness of guilt in the sight of God. The great reason why the doctrine of the Atonement has fallen into some neglect or even disrepute is not that it has been shown to be unnecessary or in any way discredited, but rather that the need of it is not realised. This great truth requires a certain depth of spiritual experience to apprehend it, and where that is not the truth cannot shine. Where there is no keen sense of sin sacrifice for sin has no meaning. Wherever the sense of guilt revives, there men turn with passionate longing to the atoning work of Jesus Christ. When a man offers to prove his love for his friend by some act of self-sacrifice the demonstration may leave us quite unmoved. But if the friend is in sore peril, and he makes sacrifice of his life in order to save him, the whole world will

wonder and applaud. So to the careless and indifferent the sacrifice of Jesus Christ may seem meaningless and unnecessary ; but to those who are conscious of sin and eager to escape its power it brings the hope of a salvation which they cannot win for themselves.



GLORYING IN THE CROSS

Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross  
of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world  
is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.—  
GAL. vi. 14.

## IX

### GLORYING IN THE CROSS

It is very difficult for us exactly to appreciate the mental condition of the man who wrote these words. They are not the utterance of a world-weary, broken-spirited saint, nor do they express the inevitable disappointment of one who has long been at war with circumstances and with his kind. They rather represent the deliberate convictions at which the apostle had arrived after much thought and long experience. So far from being the outcome merely of a passing mood, they tell of a growing intensity of feeling and of a belief deeply rooted in knowledge. It is quite true that the experience which lies behind the words was an exceptional one, and that they represent a very lofty level of life and thought. But to the man who uttered them they were real, and though for us



they may seem to point to an ideal, it is at least one that we may count to be attainable.

As they stand in this last chapter of the letter to the Galatians the words read almost like a parenthesis ; but they really serve to sum up one of the points for which the apostle has been contending all through. Their immediate occasion is his reference to the efforts of the Jewish Christians to make their converts from heathenism conform to certain Jewish customs. Their object, says Paul, is to make a fair show in the flesh and to avoid persecution ; but all the time they are compromising a principle, and there is nothing in this mere outward conformity which can help men to an inward life of truth and grace. It is all a question of trifles, of a mere glorying in the flesh ; and, says the apostle, with an outburst of natural impatience : “ Far be it from me to glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.”

The words, of course, introduce us at once to wider ground, and to a larger question than that of mere Jewish legalism ;

and in order to interpret them we must examine first the peculiar phraseology of the apostle, and must clearly understand the two key-words of this passage—the Cross, and the World.

By glorying in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul does not mean merely adoration of the instrument of torture on which Jesus died. He rather uses the death of Jesus, with all its terrible accompaniments, as the supreme event in His life, as standing for His whole redemptive and sacrificial work. To him the Cross of Jesus Christ included all that was covered by the incarnation of the Son of God and the redemption of man. The whole life and work of Jesus Christ—His pure and holy manhood, His divine wisdom, His tender sympathy, His saving grace, His glorious sacrifice, His risen power—all was summed up for the apostle in the single word, the Cross.

And so again the World here does not mean simply the ordinary occupations and interests of human life. Paul was by no means dead to these things. On the other hand he was a particularly active member

of society, and succeeded in profoundly influencing the world. And in this respect at least he would have all Christians follow his example. What he is thinking of here is not so much the life as the thought, the spirit, the ambitions of this present world. It is the whole sensuous and material aspect of things which he here sees in contradiction to the spiritual. And when these come into conflict he declares that he glories in the one and is altogether indifferent to the other. He can play his part in this life like any other man, but he plays it in the hope and by the inspiration of higher and better things. And we must keep this carefully in mind as we try to study his words.

“Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is a rich experience behind these words, and a vivid background of contrasts present to the writer’s mind. St. Paul was not a dull, limp pessimist, who had learnt to live at the centre of indifference and in whose veins the tide of life ran slowly, but a man of keen, ardent, and passionate nature. Whatever he did, he did with his might, and it was

only natural to him to be enthusiastic. As a Jew he had not been content with a decent modicum of patriotism and religious fervour, but according to his own testimony had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees. In those old days he had gloried in the law and the covenant and the promises. He had felt himself specially favoured of Heaven in having received, as he thought, a mandate to defend the faith of Israel and punish her enemies. He threw himself with vigour into the crusade against Christians; he was eager to obey the law to the last letter; he revelled in the esteem of his elders, and strove eagerly to win new laurels of praise. And in course of time this zeal became transferred to Jesus Christ, only quickened and intensified as the object of it was higher and more precious. And as we read between the lines of his writings, we cannot fail to see that in the past Paul's energy had often been the energy of despair—now it was the energy of new-born hope.

In his story of the "Pilgrim's Progress" Bunyan is more or less consciously reproducing the experience of St. Paul. When

under the bondage of the law, he was like a man fleeing from the city of destruction with a heavy weight on his shoulders. But at the Cross of Jesus Christ he found his burden removed, and henceforth he was not as one escaping from darkness but journeying towards life and light. Now that he was enjoying the liberty of the Gospel, he was able to understand, as he never could understand before, the bondage under which he had once groaned. As he pondered over the work of Jesus Christ, it seemed to him more and more a work of emancipation and grace. Up to the point of his meeting with Jesus his whole life had been one long effort to obtain a sure sense of freedom and of the favour of God. For this he had toiled and fought and prayed. And when he found in the Cross of Jesus Christ his highest hopes realised, and that which he had striven so desperately to earn offered to him as a free gift and won for him at the price of an infinite sacrifice—his joy and wonder, his gratitude and adoration knew no bounds. And his quick instinct realised at once the bearing of these good tidings upon human



life. For him the relations between earth and heaven were altogether changed. Love took the place of law, and man and God were no longer kept apart as antagonists, but in Christ stood side by side as allies, comrades and friends. It was no wonder then that the apostle transferred to the new dispensation all his enthusiasm for the old, and that with an added passion of lively gratitude and adoring love, he exclaimed, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Through whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." This was the practical outcome of the apostle's glorying. Just as the death of Jesus on the cross meant His translation into the higher world, and His emancipation from the things of time and sense—so the Christian life is a new life, and a Christian man dead to all interests save those of the Kingdom of God. The change this involved to St. Paul was not a change in outward circumstances or behaviour, but a change in the man himself. Things were different for him because he was different; and the difference consisted not



in a new uniform or a new creed, but in a new relationship between himself and God. And this involved necessarily a new relation between himself and the world around him. It was the same world, but he had changed, and it was therefore changed to him. The work of Jesus Christ, as he came to understand it, introduced him into a new universe, which he learnt to describe through the familiar antitheses, life and death, the spirit and the flesh, time and eternity, God and the world. These were to him mutually exclusive terms, and his new life in and unto God meant for him a very real renunciation of this present world. Once he had loved its life, its honours, its ambitions, but all that had changed when he came to live unto Him who died for him and rose again. In the old days under the law, as he says himself, he had been a child, and had loved the toys and games of childhood ; but now he has become a man, and has put away childish things. His life in Christ means for him a degree of spiritual maturity which is not compatible with an exclusive interest and absorption in the things of time and sense.

He remains in the world, of course, and has to play his part there like other men. But he does so in virtue of the stimulus which his devotion to Christ supplies. So far as he is concerned life is a much larger thing than it was before, and when he takes God into account as He is revealed in Jesus Christ, he feels himself to be but a stranger and a pilgrim in this world. His highest interests and dearest hopes are elsewhere—in the life that is hid with Christ in God. “Through whom the world has been crucified unto him, and he unto the world.”

This, then, is the position of St. Paul, and in spite of the figurative language in which he clothes it, it is a position which in its main features is not difficult to understand. The point, however, is that he insists that it represents the proper attitude of all Christians—the height to which they must rise, the spirit which they must cultivate. And we have, therefore, to apply it to ourselves and to our own circumstances and times, before we can really grasp its strength. And in order to do this, let us note first of all that the apostle’s contention has been

justified in history. When St. Paul spoke of the Cross of Jesus Christ as the sole object of his glorying, it must have seemed to the men of his time a wild extravagance, or the very quixotism of faith. To the ordinary reader of his letters the Cross of Jesus Christ was an offence and a stumbling-block. And to those who could regard it dispassionately, it was no more than the badge of an obscure sect of people, illiterate and uninfluential to the last degree. At the time when St. Paul wrote the name of Jesus Christ had been heard of only by a very small section of the human race, and to these it had seemed to bring only persecution and trouble. It seemed almost grotesque to place it beside the chief things in which men gloried in those days.

The great world of the Roman Empire offered a striking example of human pride and achievement. There were vast wealth, invincible armies, and great administrative power. There were luxury, commerce, literary and artistic skill, amusement reduced to a fine art, everything that could enhance the value of life on the vastest scale. And

to sum up all this in a word, and say that beside the Cross of Christ it was worth nothing and had no real attractive power, would seem the idea almost of a lunatic. And yet here we may say that St. Paul builded better than he knew, and history has made good his words. In the course of time the Cross came to conquer the Roman Empire, and even mightier powers. That despised symbol, with all that it stood for, became the most potent force in the world, and exercised an influence on human life and character such as has not been seen elsewhere. We all know now that Paul was right when he saw a grandeur and a beauty and a power in the Cross of Jesus, beside which all the pomp and splendour of the mighty Empire of Rome was but a very little thing. The world which St. Paul knew has passed away for ever. We can trace its influence in the institutions of to-day; we can dig its ruins from the dust; but the pride and glory and strength of it are no more. But the Cross abides. It is as potent to-day in the lives of great multitudes as it was in the life of Paul. It still wins

its victories, for it represents an eternal principle, and it fills an undying need of the human heart. It remains still the inspiration of the purest and noblest life, the source of the highest ideals, the object of the deepest devotion, and the ground of the loftiest hopes. Looking at the history of the past alone, the achievements of the Cross alone more than justify the language of Paul, and enable us seriously, and as the expression of our sober conviction, to use the words of the hymn :

In the Cross of Christ I glory ;  
Towering o'er the wrecks of time,  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.

For, once more, the language of the apostle can be justified in the experience of men to-day. We do not mean that men glory in the Cross of Christ as St. Paul did, to the exclusion of all other objects of pride ; but that if they were logical and really lived on the level of their best and truest thoughts, they would be forced to do so. We boast ourselves to-day in the wonderful achievements of science and



civilisation. Our hearts swell with pride when we think of all that has been done to perfect our control over the forces of Nature, and to make them obedient to our needs. And there is here, no doubt, legitimate cause for pride and gratitude. But every one who tries really to think knows that this is only one side to the picture. There is another and a darker, which forces itself on our notice, and takes the bloom off our triumph. All our boasted civilisation has not appreciably diminished the sum of human sin and wretchedness—nay, there is reason to question whether it has not increased it. And as things are, no reasonable being can feel himself satisfied with the glory of this present world. It is quite true that in this life we are like the spectators of a stage-play : it may interest and amuse us, or even absorb and fascinate us for a time, but we never lose the sense that it will be over soon, and we shall be brought face to face with realities. Now it is for this reality, the under-side of life, the spiritual and the eternal, that the Cross of Christ



stands, and it is this which gives it all its attractiveness for men. We can see dim indications of this in the most unlikely quarters.

For example, in the pomp and circumstance of war there is always something which fascinates even those who can quite well see the obverse side, its horrors, agonies, and unutterable woe. And such men are not children, to be taken with the glamour and glitter and romance of the thing. There is a deeper side to it; something great and splendid about it, which attracts. And to put this in a single word it is—and it is here said with all reverence—the principle of the Cross. Reduced to plain terms, the root idea of the soldier's profession is one of self-sacrifice. He holds himself ready to die for his country, if need be, in the hour of his country's peril. He stands a substitute for the great mass of non-combatants at home; and however one may deprecate this, and feel the burden and the misery it involves, one cannot but recognise also that there is an element of greatness, of heroism about it, which men delight to honour.

This is only one illustration of a truth which is as wide as human experience. Men admire wealth, and learning, and inventive skill, and the capacity for patient, dogged toil; but this is nothing to the praise they will give to voluntary self-sacrifice for the sake of others. It need not be that of a soldier on the battlefield who wins the Victoria Cross; it may only be that of a poor miner, or a railway porter, or a fireman, or of a mother stitching her life away for the sake of her children; but whatever it is, there is something in the story of self-sacrifice which brings tears to the eyes and a lump to the throat—the unconscious homage which men pay to the Cross. And it is not the mere act of self-sacrifice that we count admirable, but the spirit which lies behind it, a spirit which overcomes even the strongest instinct of the human breast, the instinct of self-preservation, and which testifies that for all men there is something greater and more precious even than life itself. And this is the spirit which, as it were, becomes incarnate in Christianity,

which sets before men a higher aim than mere happiness, which puts God in the place of self and delights to do His will, and which, as one has well said, makes men as "dead to the ambitions of the world and as little touched by them as little children are touched by cheques or titles." This was the spirit of St. Paul when he said: "Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

And so when we come to look at the Cross of Jesus Christ from this wider and more spiritual standpoint, we can see ample reason for making it the ground of all our pride.

For one thing, it has brought God nearer to us, and given us a deeper insight into His nature. Revelation, both of the natural and special kind, has done much to educate men up to truer and higher ideas of God; but just as a little practice is worth much more than theory, so sacrifice can do more than revelation. The death of Jesus on the cross, however we may view it, is at least a demonstration of His love such as no mere statement could ever

approach. In the life of Jesus Christ God is made not only manifest to men, but real. It is no longer necessary to feel after Him if haply we may find Him; He is seen in the closest relation to our humanity. We know by means of an object-lesson, such as even infants could understand, what His love and pity mean. And the revelation is sealed and satisfied on the cross. That was the crowning act of reconciliation; and God and man no longer stand apart as strangers and enemies, but have been brought nigh. We see here God making, as it were, common cause with our sufferings and our needs. And the vision fills us with a new and glorious hope. The old fear is cast out by this perfect love, and salvation is no longer a distant dream, but a present and realised boon. And as we have henceforth no other ground of life, we have no other ground of pride. We know our own weakness too well to boast of ourselves, and this world can offer us nothing comparable to the peace and joy which men have found in Jesus Christ. In the glory of

God's manifested love all shadows grow dim and fade away.

Then again we can glory in the Cross of Christ because it teaches us the meaning of suffering, and so lifts the darkest shadow from our souls. He for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising shame. His life was one long contradiction of sinners. He was cradled in poverty; He grew up amid loneliness and misunderstanding. He was tempted almost to the limit of endurance; He knew the bitterness of defeat, the treachery of friends, and crushing bodily pain. But looking back on His life through the triumph which He afterwards won, we can see that all this suffering, harsh and unnecessary as it seems, was part of His life's work, and had its special function to fulfil. He teaches us a stern lesson of duty and obedience and endurance and self-sacrifice, and bids us remember that there are greater and better things than happiness, which never comes to those who only seek it. He would have us make a place in our lives for the Cross, and know that only



by the way of discipline and suffering and self-sacrifice can we hope to attain the high ends of our humanity. It is true that the Cross is still an offence, and we ask impatiently, Why should we thus be called to suffer? But surely we might ask that question regarding Him. Never was suffering so undeserved, so seemingly wanton as His. And yet we know His suffering was justified, and in that knowledge we should see a reason for ours. As one has finely said: "When one enters the dimness of a foreign cathedral, he sees nothing clearly for a while save that there is a light from the eastern window, and it is shining above a figure raised high above the choir. As one's eyes grow accustomed to the gloom he identifies the crucifix repeated in every side-chapel, and marks that to this Sufferer all kneel in their trouble and are comforted. From age to age the shadow hangs heavy on life, and men walk softly in the holy place, but ever the crucifix faces them, and they are drawn to His feet and goodness by the invitation of the pierced hands." "Far be it from



me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

But once more, we cannot fail to note how the Cross widens our horizon and corrects the perspective of our lives. We glory in it because it answers the craving of our human nature, and reminds us so forcibly that "man doth not live by bread alone." In the light of it we learn something of the true value of the things which this world counts precious, and of the little space in eternity which our lives here occupy. The grand source of all our troubles and uneasiness is the fact of our infinite nature. We know we were not made to die; we know there is a higher destiny in store for us than any which this earth can offer. And the Cross of Jesus Christ lifts for a moment the veil from the unseen, and raises our ideal of life, and bids us endure hardness for a time in the hope of the glory which is yet to be, and in our patience win our souls. "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

MADE UNTO US REDEMPTION

He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness,  
and sanctification, and redemption.—1 Cor. i. 30.

## X

### MADE UNTO US REDEMPTION

ONE of the perennial subjects of debate which the New Testament affords is the relationship between the teaching of Jesus and that of the apostle Paul. It is sometimes freely asserted that there is a real difference between the point of view of St. Paul and that of his Master, or at any rate that Christian theology is far too exclusively Pauline both in form and substance. And there is this much truth in the contention—that while Jesus supplied the basis of Christian life and the motives for Christian theology, it was reserved for the apostle Paul to cast these into certain forms, in the making of which the conditions of his time and his own peculiarities of temperament, training and experience were alike effective. But this does not involve the further position that there is anything like conflict between

the two. The more closely the matter is investigated the more clearly does it appear that the relation between them is strictly that of seed and plant. Or, to use a familiar illustration, Jesus Christ drew the apex of the angle, and the apostle simply prolonged the sides. This is readily understood when we examine the position which St. Paul assigned to His Lord and Master. His attitude towards Him is never that of one who was improving upon what He had done. He shrank from the notion that there should be any thought of a Pauline gospel as distinguished from that of Christ. His whole attitude of mind was what, in a familiar modern phase, is called "Christocentric." For him Christ was the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. Nor was this for him merely a personal matter. What Christ was for the apostle He was to be also for all believers. Their communion with Him was to be as real, as intense, as regulative of life as that of the disciples themselves. From Him they derived their new life of the spirit, and in Him it was nourished and maintained. Their union with Him was

not merely the mystical fusing of two intelligences, hidden under the disguise of spirits, but the union of two wills, one in subordination to the other. It arose out of an act of personal faith, and it found its expression in a moral, spiritual and practical life that was inspired and governed from the central will of Christ. "He was made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Now, the doctrine of Christ's supreme authority in religious things is one which in these days quite rightly finds fresh favour in men's eyes. He at once transcends and supersedes the law and the letter, the priest and the church. We regard Him not only as the source of our salvation and inspiration, but as our final court of appeal. And the question as to how this works out in the practical experience of every day is one of supreme importance, and one too on which some light is thrown by the words of the apostle now before us.

1. "He was made unto us Wisdom." To the apostle this is the work of God. His revelation in Jesus Christ is explicated in the



work of Christ on the souls and in the lives of men. But it is God's doing all the same. And it is not difficult to understand how the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus constitutes for us the beginning and the end of all wisdom. As Jesus Himself said : " I am the truth." Now, this does not mean that Christianity is merely an intellectual system ; still less that it is on a level with the ancient mysteries, or that it is a body of esoteric doctrine, and that men and women have to be initiated into it by some secret rites and ceremonies. It implies rather that there is a wisdom which is from above—that only through Christ can men attain to any wisdom worth the name, to that well-balanced judgment and nice sense of proportion which can alone preserve the mind from error. Nor do the words mean that knowledge can be divided into separate compartments, and some of these labelled Christian and others heathen, or carnal, or secular. We must never forget that the perception of truth depends not on any single faculty but on the whole man, and that the condition of the perceiving subject is quite

as important as the objects which are presented to his view—just as in photography the condition of the sensitive plate is as important as the light and sun. We all know to our cost what a serious difference the state of our bodily health makes to our view of things around us. The atrabilious temperament looks at the universe in one way and the sanguine in another. And both of them are equally far removed from the truth. And the same thing happens when one faculty of the mind has been cultivated at the expense of all the others. The man who is a mathematician, or a scientist, or a student of the classics, and nothing more, finds his judgment of things inevitably warped in the direction of his own peculiar bent and tastes. He is apt, however, to think that all wisdom dwells with him, and he is apt to be quite wrong. And so this may help us to understand how Christ may become to men the final test and authority in intellectual matters as well as in those which are purely ethical and spiritual. It is not due to any judgment which He forms, favourable or otherwise,

on the wisdom of men, nor to any new light on intellectual questions which He has to impart ; but simply to the effect which He produces on human nature. " He is made unto us wisdom," because in Him we learn that wisdom dwells not in our minds and not in the minds of the wisest of the children of men, but in God.

The more we inquire into the working of the universe and into the history and achievement of human thought, the closer do we draw to God Himself. The truth as it is in Jesus is not merely one section of religious knowledge, the possession of which somehow entitles a man to despise all other knowledge and relegate it to a lower sphere. It is rather that in Christ all knowledge becomes sacred, because it is all seen to be of God. And so the assurance that " He is made unto us wisdom " speaks comfort and hope to all of those who find themselves perplexed and troubled in the presence of truth not known or even suspected before. This cannot be in conflict with the truth as it is in Jesus, but only with our dim ideas of it and its appearance, because it testifies

for us that a time has come for a better and wider knowledge of Christ, since no truth which the mind of man can discover can be alien to Him who is the truth. The fear lest any truth which what we call man's wisdom can apprehend, should prove hostile to the kingdom of God and to the furtherance of His will, is a sign not merely of an unbalanced mind, but of a very imperfect and even rudimentary faith. If we are to trust Christ at all we must trust Him all round, and let Him speak to every side of our nature, and help us in the development of every faculty we possess. And we shall surely not reach this ideal until we have learnt that "He is made unto us wisdom."

2. "And Righteousness." This means that the authority of Christ in the sphere of ethics is supreme. Of our righteousness He is at once the norm and the source. As He said to the men of His own day, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven," so He says to us, Except your righteousness reach a higher standard than that of the

world about you, ye are no disciples of Mine. The ideal He sets before us is no less than this—that we should daily realise that Divine Image in the likeness of which we were made. As Christians we cannot and dare not set before ourselves an ideal of conduct lower than the divine. One reason why our Christianity in these days is often so ineffective, is that we measure ourselves among ourselves, and are content if we can feel that we do not fall very far below the average of our fellow-believers.

Now, the work of Jesus Christ on the soul convinces man of sin, and at the same time elevates his whole moral ideal. He is no longer content with the beggarly elements of his former state, but is lifted up with a new air of expectation and with a larger ambition. But this in itself would be his ruin, were it not for the fact that Christ is to his renewed soul not only its standard of righteousness, but also its guarantee. The man who has found in Jesus Christ not only his own sin, but his salvation, has henceforth no longer his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith



of Christ, "the righteousness which is of God by faith." In other words, "Christ is made unto him righteousness." Sharing as he does the life of his Lord, he shares also in His ethical perfection. This does not mean that he becomes at a single stroke sinless, and has the right to claim for himself that he has attained all that he need desire ; but rather that God judges him not according to his mean desert, but on the basis of what in Christ he may become. This doctrine of imputed righteousness, as it has been called, is not the mere immoral fiction it often seems. It is simply the freest and fullest expression of the divine grace. We cannot any of us escape the sense of man's sin, of the deep imperfection of his human nature. And yet for all that we never deal with man simply on the basis of his present sins and failures ; we try to make the best of him, And we know that the cynic and pessimist, who see always his worst side, take a radically false view.

Now, we must allow the same liberty to God. Through Christ He gives to man righteousness, which in him is potential



rather than actual. He sees the man rooted and grounded in Christ. Contact with redeeming love has brought out all that is best in his nature; his true self appears as it never could do when he walked in the ways of sin and death. The very blindest of us can see it now. We marvel at the transformation which has taken place, and we ask in our inept way, Who would have thought it? And can we blame the grace, the infinite mercy, the tender and compassionate insight of God, who all the while has been dealing with the man on the ground of that best in him which was yet to be? Can we, with our keen sense of sin and bitter sorrow for it, refuse to allow Him to treat us in the light, not of what we are, but of what we may become? "Christ is made unto us righteousness," because the ideal which He sets before us is after all more real than the actual of our everyday lives. Or, as one has said: "Which after all is the truest and deepest estimate of a man? That which is based on his actual imperfections and failures, or that which penetrates through all these, and sees only

the divine idea of man, the glorious strength and incorruptible faith and stainless purity and unselfish devotion which are possible to him? That which is seen in a man is temporal; that which is unseen, or seen only to the heart that loves him, is eternal." We shall at least be wise if we allow that God can see and know and judge us with this divine insight, and according to the standards of His infinite grace. We shall be lifted up with a new and larger hope if we can see with His eyes, and believe that "Christ is made unto us righteousness."

3. And it is in something of the same way and for the same reason that Christ is to us also—"Sanctification," the source and ground and guarantee of the holy life. No little trouble has arisen from the persistency with which Christian people have regarded the redemptive or priestly work of Jesus as an accomplished fact. It is of course that in one sense—viz. that there is no need for any further sacrifice, and that men are saved on the bare action of Jesus alone. But that does not mean that the work of salvation is concluded with the

acceptance of God's mercy in Jesus Christ. That is the beginning of the divine life in man, not its consummation. It is quite true that the new life is not the product of man's native energy—it comes from God, and is the gift of His grace; but all the same it is not to be buried in the earth but enjoyed and used. And in the using of it Christ will have His part as well as the disciple. He is made unto us not only righteousness but sanctification. This means that progress is the law of Christian as of all other life, and that for it Christ supplies not only the germ or seed, but the necessary conditions and environment.

We often boast that the introduction of Christianity into the world has been the greatest possible incentive to progress, and has brought about the benefits of our modern civilisation; but we sometimes forget that what is civilisation in the mass is sanctification in the individual. We are all born babes in Christ, and it is only through His help that we can attain the measure of the stature of a full-grown man. The standard of Christian thought and living common

to many of us seems to show that we are contented to remain all our days in the cradle, and that we have not yet learnt aright to use the grace which we have received and wherein we stand. The work of faith does not come to an end in justifying or setting a man right before God ; it is still needed for the sanctifying process of everyday life. In Jesus Christ a man finds his conscience redeemed from the sense of guilt, and his moral nature set free for service. So Christ becomes to us the promise and potency of a new righteousness, which is not after any human pattern. Justification and sanctification go hand in hand, and are the two sides of one and the same process.

This is a point on which the apostle Paul constantly insists. Faith in Christ becomes the energetic principle of a new life of Christian sanctity. To Him faith is the link which binds together religion and morality, the ethical and the spiritual life. It is true that in the history of the Christian Church the connection between faith and morals has not always been maintained.

But this has been a departure from, and not a consequence of, the teaching of St. Paul. Faith uniting the soul with Christ becomes at the same time the means of a new moral order. To the Christian Christ becomes not only the pattern, but the one energy of the soul, the power of an endless life. There is nothing artificial about the process—it is a necessary consequence of the spiritual awakening. This explains how it is that Christianity produces such marvellous results with humble and illiterate people, who may not be altogether capable of appreciating the loftiness of the ideal in Christ. It shows, too, how Christ becomes in a very real sense a test and a touchstone of religious life. Sneer as we may at the blemishes of Christian sainthood which history has revealed, it still remains true that we are called to be saints, and that Christ has as it were missed His vocation with us unless He has produced in us the saintly temper and quality. “He is made unto us sanctification.”

4. And “He is made unto us Redemption.” This is at once the beginning and



the conclusion of the whole matter. It sums up all that we have been saying hitherto, and is the foundation on which it rests. The redemptive work of Christ stands first in the order of Divine purpose—from it follows the wisdom which is from above, the righteousness of God, and the holy life. But it is not as a mere personage in history that He makes His work here felt. He is to us—redemption. It is in our living experience of His saving power that the words come true. Of course this implies certain historical facts, but they must be received and acted upon by us before their real meaning and weight can be felt. The final certainties in religion are not wholly historical, but moral and spiritual as well. And Jesus as the Redeemer has an authority over the human conscience, and also over human history, which could not have been otherwise acquired. It is this which gives to Christian experience its power and validity.

The question is sometimes asked, What evidence have we for the work of Christ on the soul? When we speak of com-



munion with Him and of our sense of His saving and uplifting power, are we after all dealing with realities in any other sense than the Roman Catholic who declares that he has personal experience of the help of the Virgin Mary and of the saints ?

The answer here of course lies in the fact that Christ is made unto us redemption, and that the evidence of this is to be found not in our imaginations alone, but in experience. And it is a question not of the intensity of that experience, but of its nature and quality. As Prof. Rufus Jones says, "The Universe backs the experience." The fact that it is ethical, has a historical origin, and produces palpable effects on the conscience through the sense of guilt, which it originates—distinguishes it at once from all mystical dreams. Our criterion is not subjective—in the state of our own imagination ; but objective—in the power of a moral imperative and in actual historical results. Hence it is the essence of the Protestant view of salvation that it is not a mere æsthetic impression, but that it has

its roots in history and its fruit in conduct. The effect of Christ's redeeming work on us cannot and must not be merely mystic devotion; it must issue in a new life of service and a fuller and closer conformity to His will. Modern theology does well in emphasising this point, that God communes with us not in sentiment or imagination, but through a fact. Looked at in one way this is the work, and the Person of Jesus Christ; looked at in another it is our redemption, or the remission of our sins. Of this Jesus is to us not merely the promise or even the guarantee, but the effective and personal realisation. It is quite true that the remission of sins, if it stands alone, does not and cannot complete the work of our salvation, but it is an essential step thereto. The curse of sin for man is really threefold. It arises from the sense of guilt, which is self-condemnation, from the fear of the condemnation of God, and from the tyranny of evil habits and passions, so easily established and so difficult to overthrow.

So, as Dr. Dale has said: "It is one

thing to receive the Divine pardon ; it is another to recover the Divine image. The first is the initial grace granted to the penitent sinner ; the second is the glory of the perfected saint.” Thus it is true that in the divine order remission of sins does not and cannot stand alone ; it is always associated with the new birth and with the first foreshadowing of that high moral and spiritual exaltation which is yet to be. And this remission we have in Jesus Christ : “ He is made unto us redemption.” Of the way in which this comes about we cannot speak here. Enough that we have large and increasing evidence of the fact. And when we come face to face with the ultimate realities we find that this is the supreme need of the human soul. Beside it all other interests fade into insignificance. It is to this that our great cloud of witnesses bears evidence. The joy and glory of the Gospel is that it brings to men freedom from the power and guilt of sin. This is the ground of our hope and the mainspring of our gratitude, and Christ is to us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification be-

cause He is redemption first. But the Gospel is not merely negative in its effects. It becomes to men the source and power of a new life—a life of clearer outlook and juster estimates and holier character. For this life Jesus Christ is at once the impulse and the example. The secret of it is union with Him by faith.



THE LORD'S SERVANT SHALL NOT  
STRIVE



He shall not strive nor cry ; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgement unto victory.—MATT. xii. 19-20.

## XI

### THE LORD'S SERVANT SHALL NOT STRIVE

THESE words form part of the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the Servant of the Lord; and whatever may have been their original application, they have certainly found fit fulfilment in the life and character of Jesus Christ. They are quoted by the Evangelist Matthew, however, almost apologetically, and as an excuse for some unexpected conduct on the part of the Master. The occasion was the healing of a man on the Sabbath day. This was an open breach of the Pharisaic rule and custom, and seemed likely to bring to a head the slumbering hostility of this straitest sect: "The Pharisees went out and took counsel against Him, how they might destroy Him." His time was not yet come, however, and Jesus withdrew Himself from among them, and though He did not cease His works of

mercy, He charged those whom He healed that they should not make Him known. This conduct was no doubt contrary to all the hopes and expectations of His followers. They looked to see Him finally assert His power, and crush the growing opposition to His claims. They were waiting for a Messianic appearance, for a divine revelation, for some startling proof of the moral and spiritual ascendancy which their Master had shown Himself to possess. Instead of this they saw Him shrinking from public appearance, failing to make good the advantage He had gained, and refusing to follow up His opportunities and acknowledge His divine origin and power in the face of the world. It says not a little for the self-restraint and spiritual insight of the first Evangelist that he is able, so to speak, to cover His Master's retreat with the striking words of the prophet Isaiah : "Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen ; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased." "He shall not strive nor cry ; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not

break, and smoking flax shall He not quench."

But there is much more in these words than an occasional excuse for occasional conduct on the part of Jesus. They represent a deep-rooted principle of His life—a policy, if we may so say, which regulated His whole earthly career. The mission of Jesus was to save rather than to destroy, to build up rather than to pull down. His method was not that of the axe and hammer, but of the slow working leaven and the seed growing silently. And His strength lay not in heroic courage or desperate activity, but in the gentleness of an exhaustless love and in the patience of a divine pity. His temper is that of the everlasting God, who giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might increaseth strength.

And it is with this wider aspect of Isaiah's words that we are now concerned. We have here a presentation of Jesus which should be full of warning and encouragement to all those called by His name.

1. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor

cause His voice to be heard in the street." Such is the Revised Version rendering of the passage in Isaiah, and the words are very vivid and emphatic. A rough and idiomatic English translation would be something like this : " He shall not scream, nor make a noise, nor advertise Himself." There is nothing loud, hysterical, or self-assertive about the method of Jesus. He is too wise and strong to descend to such devices, and the Spirit of God that is in Him will not suffer Him to use the means loved of men. There is nothing in Him of the demagogue or the agitator ; the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

And here is a lesson which the followers of Jesus need to learn, an example which they must follow. It matters not whether they are engaged in building up Christ's cause or in opposing the forces of the Evil One ; they are to show themselves of His temper and of His serene faith. Knowing as they do that they have God behind them, they can afford to laugh at the assaults of men and to dispense with their devices. Jesus was in stern opposition to the orthodox religion of

His time. The Pharisees, with their scrupulous piety and their hedge round the Law, were an abomination to Him, and yet it was not until the very end of His career that He came into open opposition with them, and denounced them as they deserved. He preferred to construct before He pulled down. He had always an eye to the work in hand. He knew when to be silent and when to speak. He felt that it was better not to testify at all than to testify in the wrong time and place. His real triumphs were not won in the streets or before the eyes of men, but in the wilderness, on the lonely mountain-side, in the little house at Bethany, or in the Garden of Gethsemane. His doctrine was never proclaimed as with a flourish of trumpets, but dropped silently like good seed into the ground. In all His conflict with the men of His day there was nothing of bitterness, no clang of party strife. Though He expressed His opinions forcibly enough, He did not compel their acceptance; if one village would not hear He passed on to another, and left the leaven to work. He did little or nothing



to startle men into belief, and against many an evil institution of His time He spoke never a word directly, though it was at utter variance with His will. When His adversaries raged and plotted He was calm ; when His judge bullied Him He was gentle and courteous ; He turned His cheek to the smiter ; and when they mocked His dying throes He prayed, " Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do." From first to last He showed the same spirit ; His strength was in gentleness and His greatness in humility. " He did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street."

But what exactly does this example mean for us ? Does it enjoin upon us a spirit of mere quietism, a helpless *laissez-faire*, and a paralysed optimism, which will make us " rest and be thankful " whatever happens, and conclude that this is " the best of all possible worlds " ? Surely not. The very fact that the result of this policy for Jesus was the scourge and the cross and the malefactor's grave shows that it is far removed from some of our pusillani-

mous imitations of it. Mild as it seems, there was nothing feeble about His method; it was most strong because most effective. As a matter of fact, the example here for us is not so much one of policy as of temper. We have to testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and we have to oppose the spirit and the works of this world. But everything depends on how we do it. Our witness has to be to truth, not to ourselves, and our strife with evil has to be effective rather than loud. The walls of Jericho may have fallen to the sound of the trumpets of Israel, but neither trumpet-blowing nor drum-beating will cast down the strongholds of the enemy in these days. Great forces generally work in silence, and we may take it as fairly axiomatic that the more noisy our religious efforts the weaker will they be. A wise general will not display his forces to the enemy, nor let them know his intentions beforehand. And so our modern method of seeking to extend the Kingdom of God by resolutions from public platforms and demonstrations in force is at least bad policy,

and the very antithesis of the spirit of Christ. The self-advertisement that inevitably accompanies so much of our popular preaching and the various modern philanthropic and religious activities is a sign of real weakness, a hindrance rather than a help. There is no room in religious work for excitement, though there may be ample scope for earnestness and enthusiasm. Self is the first demon that needs to be exorcised, and meekness the first necessity. If a man is forced to the front let him stand there and hold his ground in God's name, but let him never lift a finger to obtain the place for himself. In quietness and confidence is our strength. "Still waters run deep," and faith is at once too strong and too delicate to use the methods of a blustering self-importance. Your work may never be heard of on the lips of men, and no report of it ever reach the ears of the world; it may be carried on in poverty and disappointment and tears; it may show all the features which the world counts as those of failure; and yet for that very reason it may meet with the approval

of the Master who did not strive nor cry.

And on the other hand, your work may show very large in statistics; you may command the ear of a crowd and the praise of men; but if it be known as *your* work, and if *you* are exalted by it, then it will scarcely win the approval of the Christ who humbled Himself, and would not lift up His voice in the streets. This does not mean that all our modern methods are vitiated with this taint, but the danger in them is great. Advertising is one of the great evils of the age, and when the spirit of advertisement enters religion the spirit of Christ departs. We have to do our work in faithfulness, patience, and humility, knowing that it is not our work but that of One greater than we. We shall best secure our results by not looking for them too curiously, grubbing up the seed before it has had time to grow, but by sowing the seed well. And if we find that the waiting is long and the mills of God grind slowly, we may still possess our souls in peace, knowing that Christ Himself did

not strive nor cry, and "the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

2. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench." These beautiful words imply that the same gentle and patient spirit which regulated the public policy of Jesus regulates also His more personal dealings with men. Even the crushed reed of a broken and ruined life, which most men would throw away as worth nothing, He will try to straighten and set up again; and the smouldering wick of a half-formed purpose of good He will not deaden, but fan and cherish into new warmth and brightness. The metaphor is a very fine one, and admits of a wide application. It is often regarded as referring in the first instance to the attitude of Christ to the heathen world around Him, and has been explained thus: "This is the singularly humane and compassionate view the prophecy takes of the Gentiles; they are bruised reeds and expiring flames. . . . What the prophecy may refer to is the human virtues, expiring among the nations but not yet dead; the sense of



God debased by idolatries but not extinct ; the consciousness in the individual soul of its own worth and its incapacities, and the glimmering ideal of a true life and a worthy activity almost crushed out. . . . This flickering light the Servant shall feed and blow into a flame." So in all our dealings with the heathen world, and in seeking to convert men to the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, we shall do well not to ignore the good in them if we would replace it by a better. We must not quench the smoking flax lest we find it impossible to light it again, nor spurn the feeble efforts of unbelief lest we break the bruised reed.

But this missionary application of the words of the prophet is by no means the only one or the best. A further thought here is that Christ looks upon men with other eyes than ours ; that He sees good in them, and cherishes hope for them where we fail to do so ; and that all the good He finds in them He will use for His own ends. There is something truly divine and very consoling to our weak humanity



in the invincible belief of Jesus that men are capable of being saved. In that belief He came into the world, and for it He suffered and died. We are in the habit of preaching that there is hope for the vilest sinner, but our actions often belie our words. And, indeed, the words in a sense would be more true, more practicable, if we dealt with sinners in the spirit and after the manner of Jesus. Wherever there is a ruined life, a character lost, a soul blackened and blasted with vice, Christ sees not a castaway, but a bruised reed that may be straightened, and a smouldering wick that may be fanned into a flame. The sin that you do may cut you off from men, may drive you out of respectable houses, may make you an outlaw and a vagabond in this world, but it can never cut you off from the pity of Christ. He waits with a wondrous patience for the first spark of returning penitence, and He will fan it into the glow of a new and better life. Yes, and even if you be crusted over with the hard rind of a selfish, worldly spirit—even if you scorn and reject the

Son of Man, and choose Cæsar or even Barabbas for your only king—He will wait for His opportunity, and when it comes you will find Him knocking at the door of your heart, a suppliant still, patient, tender, forgiving, waiting to be gracious, and to turn to good issue the least sign of a returning and awakening soul. We say man's necessity is God's opportunity: we should say, too, man's despair is God's hope. He knows what is in man, and He understands that there is power in the tiniest seed of good to force the fresh shoot of a new life through even the thickest crust of evil. "The reed that is broken He breaks not off. The wick that is fading He does not quench."

And the same is true of those who are hard-pressed in the battle of life, of those who labour and are heavy-laden. Trouble can scotch but it cannot kill, and Christ is stronger than all the forces of this world. He will not add by the weight of a hair to the heavy burdens that men carry. His yoke is easy and His burden light. And men need, indeed, all the comfort they can

get from Him in these days. The struggle for life is a very bitter and desperate one for multitudes. For every one that is successful, many go to the wall. All the forces of the modern world are set against the weak and helpless—only the fittest survive. Troubles never come singly, and sometimes the rush and onset of them is so resistless that we are borne off our feet, and left stunned and bleeding by the wayside. Or they pass over us like a withering sirocco, and faith dies, and even the eternal flower of hope fades before their cruel heat. But He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. When you are most helpless He is most helpful. When life is at its lowest ebb His reviving power is at its best. When fortune has vanished, and health is impaired, and the spirit is broken, and the world frowns—then He can do His work, and bind up your bruises, and pour oil into your wounds, and give a new foundation to faith and kindle hope afresh. The Good Shepherd gathers the lambs in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young. “Come unto Me,”

He says, "all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

And if it be but a faithless spirit from which we suffer, He shows the same tireless patience and the same restoring grace. There are multitudes of Christians whose lives are, comparatively speaking, wasted from an over-consciousness of their own weakness, and who would so learn Christ as almost to force Him to break the bruised reed. They can never do any good; it is useless to look for fruits; Christian work is not in their line; they have enough to do with setting their own house in order. Besides, they are not sure of themselves; they hardly know what they believe. Their faith is not great enough to assure them that even they may become instruments in God's name. They forget the story of the widow's mite and the large and generous judgment of Christ, and because they cannot do much they will do nothing. For such it is a happy thing that Christ does not take men at their own valuation. He does not expect any of us to become good all in a moment. He knows what is in

man, and is not disappointed with the feebleness of our efforts and the frailty of our faith. He will not snub our weak endeavours, but encourage them, and bids us know that if we have done all we can, we have done enough for His approval. He will not lay upon us burdens heavier than we can bear. When faith is very weak He will take us by the hand and gently guide our faltering steps. And when the flame of divine life in us is faint and flickering, He will fan and cherish it till it grows bright and strong. "The bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."

**THE MINISTERING CHRIST**



Ye call me Master, and Lord : and ye say well ;  
for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master,  
have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash  
one another's feet.—JOHN xiii. 13-14.

## XII

### THE MINISTERING CHRIST

WE have before us here a parable in action. It is the beginning of the final stage of the self-revelation of Jesus Christ. He is speaking to His own, and His language is of the most intimate and personal kind. He sets before them an object-lesson such as only those who have come into close and confidential relationship with Him can understand. The purpose of Jesus, as St. John explains it on this occasion, is to reveal His love to His disciples in some marked and special way, and in doing so, at the same time to set them an example of the manner in which they were to behave to one another. And we need to look behind the scenes a little before we can grasp the full bearing of His action, or follow the meaning of the lesson He intended to convey. It was the custom in Palestine

and other Eastern countries, where sandals were largely worn instead of shoes, to wash the feet on entering a house, especially when it was intended to partake of food or make any long stay. In the case of strangers it was the duty of a host to provide a special slave to perform this office for his guests. They would lie on couches with their feet extended beyond them, so that the slave could easily pass from one to the other and loose their sandals and pour cold water over their feet. Now, apparently on this occasion Jesus and the disciples had sat down to supper in the upper room with unwashed feet. It is hardly likely that Jesus would have washed His disciples' feet during the meal if they had already been washed on entering the room. It would have been a useless display, quite foreign to His character and aims.

And yet the omission of the customary washing before the meal was so unusual that we are bound to look for a reason for it. From a parallel passage in St. Luke's Gospel we gather that the disciples had just at this time been disputing who among

them was greatest, and the words of Jesus on this occasion evidently refer to the dispute. Under ordinary circumstances one of their number would have washed the feet of the rest before the meal commenced. But on this night they all shrank from the office, and none of them would confess that he was so far the servant of the rest as to be willing to wash their feet. And so they come into the room and take their places, each determined that he will leave the work to some one else for that night. And we can fancy how they sat looking suspiciously at each other, like sulky school-boys. And Jesus saw it all, and mourned over it. They were in no fit temper to hear what He had to say to them, and He felt that He must do something to bring them to a better frame of mind. Nothing could more unfit them for their task than the suspicious, self-assertive mood they were cherishing. And so in His great love and pity He rises from the table before the meal is half through, strips Himself like a slave, takes up the pitcher and basin and towel that were waiting there, and Himself

washes the disciples' feet. The men were conscience-stricken and annoyed. Peter impulsively refused to let Him so demean Himself, but Jesus quieted Him with a word, and went on till He had finished His task. His love was of that pure and selfless kind which showed itself in thought for others and service of their needs, at a time when He might well have been pre-occupied with the sense of His own peril and of His impending doom.

Now there are many points in this incident which might well occupy our attention. But (1) let us look broadly at the whole story and at the main ideas which it suggests. It is by His claim to be the servant of His disciples that the divine right of Jesus is made startlingly manifest. It is not merely that He rises above their petty pride and jealousy and shows Himself to be of a large and magnanimous temper to which they were strangers, but that in His very humiliation the evidence of His power is to be found. There need not be much hesitation in saying that the most super-

natural thing about Jesus Christ was His humility. Glance for a moment at the situation in which He was placed, and compare His conduct in it with that of ordinary men, and it will be seen what is meant. He lived His life on earth in constant companionship with those who in character and intellect were altogether inferior to Himself. This is the kind of discipline which almost invariably makes men pompous and self-assertive. We know only too well what a little brief authority can do in that respect—we call it legitimate self-esteem. But with Jesus no such thing ever happened. He must have understood clearly enough the distance which separated Him from those around Him, but He never made them feel it offensively. He never even showed that common desire of men to be looked up to by others. He consistently and of set purpose humbled Himself, and thereby wrought, as any one who understands human nature will admit, a moral miracle.

Then again, Jesus was called to submit to undeserved suffering of the most grievous



kind. It has been said that "if egotism is latent in any part of a man's nature there is nothing like undeserved suffering to bring it out." And that is perfectly true for most of us. How we wail and lament when we are wronged, and how bitterly and clamorously we assert what we call our rights! We have only to contrast with this the attitude of Jesus under persecution—His majestic silence in the judgment hall, His pity and prayer for the executioners—in order to understand how immeasurable is the distance which separates His conduct in this respect from ours. Indeed, so remarkable is this aspect of the character of Jesus that some of those who have most closely studied it and are best able to appreciate its meaning, rather than infer from it that Jesus was divine, have come to the conclusion, reached by some of His contemporaries, that He was beside Himself. They mean, of course, that He was a real fanatic, self-deluded and self-betrayed. They consider that some such conclusion is necessary in order to explain the wonder of His life, and the strange contrast between

the exaltation of His claims and the apparent weakness of His attitude. But they forget that it is an established fact that insanity and self-consciousness go hand in hand. Our asylums are filled with messiahs, and kings, and queens, and all the great ones known to history, but such a thing as conscious humility in the insane is not known. Of course this proves nothing as regards Jesus Himself. But it shows to what desperate lengths men will go in order to avoid the natural explanation of so wonderful a personality as that of Jesus Christ.

When we come to analyse ourselves, and realise all the subtle power of pride within us, and the innumerable secret and involuntary ways in which our self-consciousness appears, we cannot avoid the tribute of our admiration for One who in this respect at least was so much greater than we, so glorious in His humility, so magnificent in His condescension. If pride is a kind of madness, as there is reason to believe, then never was there a saner being than Jesus Christ. In this He showed the

absolute perfection of His human nature. And for this we, who realise what it means, should be ready to hail Him our Lord and our God. Egotism in a man is an invariable sign of weakness. The strength of Jesus Christ is shown in His self-renunciation. When we seek to decry and humble ourselves the effort is often morbid and strained—but another form of secret self-esteem. But with Jesus the whole thing was supremely natural. His spirit of humility fitted Him like a garment. It is without parallel in history, and supplies for us a test of His divine claim and character of the most potent kind.

But (2) the difficulty on the occasion before us is not only that Jesus gave a striking manifestation of His humble and gentle spirit, but that in doing so He set an example for others to follow. "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do unto others as I have done to you." Now, it is easy to evade this by saying that these words were ad-

dressed to disciples, and that Jesus said many things to the twelve that can hardly be applied directly to the rank and file of His followers. But that excuse will hardly hold in this case. The words are followed up by a perfectly general application: "The servant is not greater than his lord," and there are numerous passages in the New Testament which go to show that the spirit which Jesus here revealed in washing His disciples' feet is supposed to be characteristic of all those who call themselves by His name.

No wonder that the idea is often regarded as difficult or even impracticable. The spirit of Jesus Christ is in direct and permanent opposition to the spirit of this world; and there can be no compromise between them. The successful type of character to-day is by no means meek and lowly, but loud, self-assertive, and pushful. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive that there is any practical value at all in this ideal of Jesus, so far removed is it from the standpoint of the average man and the practice of everyday life. A certain degree of

vanity and self-assertion is regarded as almost a necessary part of our equipment for the battle of life. Unless we think a good deal of ourselves no one else will think very much of us, and the estimate in which we are held by our fellows is all-important for our happiness and success in life. Even a fancied slight is enough to embitter our cup for many a long day, and some of us make existence intolerable for all around us by our absurd and sensitive self-importance. Love of advertising has been by no means confined to the commercial world, but dominates the social and religious. It has seized upon the churches like a plague, and every minister of religion who is alive to it has a rare struggle to keep his place as indeed a minister, a servant of men. The same thing appears as log-rolling in literature, and sanctions the most vulgar and ostentatious display in social life. Indeed, the aim of every other person you meet seems to be to show that he is at least as good as the rest of the world, if not a little better, and we all know to what gross absurdities of



dress, language, and manners this leads. It is easy enough to point out the evil in this, and it is condemned in the very statement of it. But for all that, there is little or no public conscience in regard to it; rather is it acquiesced in, if not approved, as a necessary and inevitable condition of modern life. Nor is it frowned upon by Christian men and women as it should be. Indeed, if we are to believe our critics, nowhere can we find such a rank growth of fussy self-importance and petty jealousy as in some so-called Christian churches. The spectacle of disciples of the Master quarrelling for place and power has been repeated many a time. And we need not wonder if we are told sometimes that it is useless to press the ideals of Jesus upon a scornful world when they are so evidently at a discount among ourselves.

And yet surely Jesus meant Himself to be taken seriously, and was giving utterance to a rare truth when He said that real greatness consists in humility and true lordship of men in service. It is, of course, a most difficult and delicate problem in ethics as



to where undue self-consciousness begins. We cannot think for a moment that Jesus in any way depreciated proper self-respect. But His whole teaching and example go to show that self-importance and egotism are much more dangerous and offensive than we generally imagine them to be, and that it is in all cases seemlier and better that we should have an estimate of ourselves which is too low rather than too high. It may not be the case in this world, but in that higher and purer region to which the thought and example of Jesus lead us, it is profoundly true that "he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Happily for some of us, the partial judgments and standards of this world are all subject to revision in the presence of God.

But we must remember that in the instance before us Jesus was not dealing with a moral question in the abstract. He cuts clean through all the niceties and distinctions with which men too often obscure the truth by the practical illustration which He sets before us. It is by his

relation to those around him that a man's spirit may be judged and tested, and whoever he may be, he cannot make himself greater and better by any value which he sets upon himself, but only by cherishing the spirit of service and sacrifice for the sake of others. Where the world says Compete with men, Christ would say Serve them. He bids us enter on a course of discipline which we may find irksome and even hard, but which is our only safeguard against pride and a condition of true self-respect.

We do not need any persuasion in order to recognise the moral greatness of the ideal here put before us. We know that the true strength of character lies in self-suppression rather than in self-assertion, and in having a great reserve behind us. We perfectly understand that true happiness is only to be found as we seek to serve others rather than gratify ourselves. The opportunities for self-sacrifice which life presents to us are great and constantly increasing, and we live well and securely in proportion as we make use of them.

Now we see whither all this leads. It means that true humility is not merely a temper of mind, but a method of life. It does not only involve that we think neither too much nor too little of ourselves, but that we think most of all of others and spend ourselves for them. No man ever lifted the burden of life by so much as a hair's-breadth by sitting down and calculating for his own enjoyment. But many a one has forgotten all the ills that flesh is heir to and the care and mystery of existence, by living not unto himself and bearing others' burdens. This is the golden road to happiness and success which Jesus opened up. We may prefer the way of self-seeking and ambition if we will ; but nothing can bring us so near the secret of things, or so open to us the heart of God, or so still the restless troubles of our life, as the discipline of self-sacrifice, the patient, humble service of our fellow-men.

But, we ask naturally, how is this to be brought about, and where are we to find the secret of this meek and quiet spirit ? And here we may gather some help from

the treatment which Jesus meted out to His disciples when they strove with one another as to who should be the greatest. He had to break them down from their pride and jealousy before He could speak to them as He wished. As has been said : " He could very well have eaten with men who were unwashed ; but He could not eat with men hating one another, and showing in every way malice and bitterness of spirit." And in washing their feet Himself He washed their hearts, and made of them new men for the time being. This great expression of His love and lowliness touched the conscience of every one of them, broke down their self-esteem, and humbled their pride. As He went round the room with the basin and towel there was probably not one of them who would not gladly have taken His place. The sight of Him serving them, and the knowledge of what it all meant, brought them to their right minds. And this is the perfectly natural result of the work of Jesus Christ on the hearts of men. In washing His disciples' feet He was only anticipating the supreme sacrifice

of His crucifixion, when He gave up Himself for men absolutely and became the servant of the race. No rebuke which He could have uttered would so have touched His disciples, or melted from off them the hard crust of their pride, as did this open manifestation of His love and lowly care. "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end." And so, for men generally, love is more potent than law, and the tenderness and pity of Christ will soften and subdue hearts that would remain hard as adamant to the threats and terrors of Sinai. As George Herbert has put it in his quaint and passionate appeal :

Throw away Thy rod,  
Throw away Thy wrath,  
Oh my God,  
Take the gentle path.

For my heart's desire  
Unto Thine is bent,  
I aspire,  
To a full consent,

Though I fail, I weep ;  
Though I halt in pace,  
Yet I creep,  
To the throne of grace.



Then let wrath remove ;  
Love will do the deed,  
For with love,  
Stony hearts will bleed.

There is the secret of all the deep hold which the sacrifice of Jesus Christ has had over the hearts and minds of men. And there we see how it becomes in us an impulse to service and an inspiration to a higher life. We cannot escape the operation of His love. It enables Him to penetrate below the dark outer surface of our sin to the better man, the nobler responsibilities within us, and to wake these into newness of life. Like Peter, perhaps we resent and resist the service He offers. Our pride will not let us submit to His grace, and bids us refuse the free gift of sacrifice. "Thou shalt never wash my feet." No: "then if I wash thee not, thou hast no part nor lot with Me." "He that into Christ's kingdom comes must enter by His door." We may be thrilled with shame and penitence as we see how He stoops to serve and help us, but that is a necessary part of the discipline which He brings. Only as we yield humbly and simply to the office



of His love, only as we abandon our own vain efforts and let Him do His proper work, do we experience what is the riches of His grace, and what the power and glory of the life that He is able to impart. In the love of Jesus Christ for man there is a perfect instrument for uprooting that pride and self-confidence which are the beginning of all sin. And only as we enter into the secret of His love and bow our proud heads in a sacrifice like unto His, does it become possible for us to share His work, and to enter upon that service of man which is the best service of God.

THE BLESSING OF THE HUNGRY  
SOUL

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst  
after righteousness: for they shall be filled.—  
MATT. v. 6.

### XIII

#### THE BLESSING OF THE HUNGRY SOUL

It will be necessary to fill in the background to these words before we can expect to understand them aright. We must remember the high ideal of conduct involved in the Jewish term "righteousness"—right relations with God on the one hand, leading up to corresponding right relations between man and his fellows. We must remember, too, the deep spiritual intention of the term "blessed"—how it signifies no mere external happiness and contentment, but is to be within men as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

None of these sayings of Jesus can really stand alone. They can never be separated from their context in His own mind. The recognition of this may help to reconcile for us some of the apparent contradictions in His teaching. Many of these beatitudes,

for example, are paradoxes, and not least of all the one before us here. Generally we feel that the blessing ought to belong to those who have already attained—to the perfect, the forgiven, the soundly-saved. Hunger, thirst, unsatisfied desire—these are the things universally regarded as among the chief disturbing influences in human life, and as in themselves altogether evil. And when Jesus sets the seal of His approval on these things, and so far as moral experience is concerned counts them among the chief blessings of mankind, we need some little persuasion to believe that He is not merely delighting in paradox, but stating a moral truth which it deeply concerns us to receive. We can, of course, easily go behind the words, and realise that certain special conditions called them forth. We can say that they were directed against the self-righteousness and self-sufficiency so mischievously prevalent among the most pious Jews. They were an emphatic protest against the supposition that in this life at any rate a man could ever attain to complete sanctity of conduct, and be content

to rest and be thankful, as though there were nothing more to be attained. But while this is true, it does not limit the application of the words, or make them valid only for the time and the circumstances in which Jesus spoke. These accidental conditions help us to understand their deeper meaning, but they show also how they represent a universal truth and one that is altogether applicable to us and our day.

“They that hunger and thirst after righteousness”—these are the blessed ones. In plain, everyday speech, men and women who really want to be good. The picture which Jesus draws is a very vivid and even terrible one. It is one of those implied parables which catch the imagination and cling to the memory. It shows us a man ravenous with hunger, parched and panting with thirst, and tells us that when we long for goodness as much as such a man longs for food and drink, that then we are among the blessed of the Lord. It is not a pleasant picture, for it seems almost to mock at our self-complacency, and to tear



up by the roots our sleek and satisfied religion. Most of us know little or nothing of that consuming anxiety for righteousness of which Jesus speaks. As we look into our own hearts we cannot but contrast our languid and occasional impulses after better things with the vehemence of our longing for amusement, happiness, wealth, or success in life. The great, broad pathway of our desires runs earthward—it is but a tiny and half-obliterated track that climbs the steep ascent of heaven. It is no wonder, then, that our unsatisfied desires are the source of restlessness and deep disappointment when we fix them on things which perish, and can never fill up the measure of our needs. They alone are blessed and satisfied who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

1. The words describe for us one aspect of the Christian life. It is a time of probation, of waiting. We are as those who watch for the morning, and until the first rays of the Sun of righteousness appear the darkness may almost be felt. Without the help of an ideal, clearly conceived and

strenuously sought after, the religious life can scarcely exist, much less flourish. And we need to recognise more clearly than we sometimes do that there is a moral value in an ideal quite apart from the measure of our achievement. This glorious divine righteousness which Christ sets before His people as an almost inaccessible goal exercises the same function in their lives as imagination does in the life of a child. Picture to yourselves a child wholly without imagination, dull, lethargic, hopeless—and you know that this is one whose success in life will be small. Its achievement will be according to the mean measure of its aims. Apart from the stimulus of some high hopes and dream-fed ambitions, few of us would ever attain much in this life. And in the life which is more abundant and not according to the flesh, everything depends on the depth and intensity of our desires.

Many of us remember how in the first dawn of our devotion to Jesus Christ we saw visions and dreamed dreams. Then we hungered and thirsted after righteousness. We believed in progressive sanctification, and

heartily longed for it in our own experience. We sought after opportunities of self-sacrifice, and mapped out ambitious plans for work. We at any rate would hurl ourselves against the blank wall of religious indifference round about us ; we would cry in the wilderness trumpet-tongued till even the very stones should hear. But we remember how time blunted the keen edge of our desire, and rude contact with what we falsely call the realities of life brought our vain dreams fluttering to the ground. And now that the grey hairs are coming, and life's responsibilities have begun to weigh heavily, we have dropped down from the mountain-heights and are content with a quiet jog-trot on some smooth and easy road. We have abandoned our ideals and no longer feel equal to large devotion or generous, self-forgetting toil. But we have not quite forgotten the old, warm, earnest days. Somehow life was brighter and more hopeful then. There was a swing and energy about it there is not now—when we hungered and thirsted after righteousness we were blessed indeed. We feel just what

Hood tried to express in his quaint and melancholy lines :

I remember, I remember  
The fir-trees dark and high,  
I used to think their slender tops  
Were close against the sky.

It was a childish ignorance,  
But now 'tis little joy  
To know I'm farther off from heaven  
Than when I was a boy.

And with the degradation of our ideal there comes the inevitable loss of faith. The less strenuously we seek after goodness the less strongly do we believe in it. You may say that we must believe in a thing first in order to seek after it; but the converse is equally true, that the more we seek after it the more we shall believe. Experience teaches that faith in God and quiet waiting for Him go hand in hand. Indeed, it is hard to see how He can be revealed to faith until faith itself has issued into a deep and heartfelt longing for better things. We have no warrant for drawing any hard-and-fast distinction between faith and character, creed and conduct. It may be that the one is a

process and the other a product, but each is imperfect without the other, like a tree and its roots. Self-distrust and yearning after something that is higher and better than self—these are the complement of a perfect faith, and constitute the blessing of those who hunger and thirst.

2. And, once more, we see here that God deals with us not so much according to our performance as according to our promise. The blessing granted to those who hunger and thirst means that He looks in us for the will to do, or to seek, or to believe. This is the difference between the law of Sinai and the law of the Sermon on the Mount—that the one regarded the religious life as a finished product, and the other as but a rough-hewn intention of the mind to be shaped by God. We can easily believe that God is sufficiently just to go behind our actions and take into consideration their secret motives and springs. But we have to go further than that, and believe that He judges us by the worth of our ambition even though it has never been realised. That we should hunger and



thirst after righteousness may argue on our side no little shame and shortcoming, though from the point of view of God it indicates a loftiness of moral purpose for which due credit must be given. We read in Old Testament history how David was not suffered to build the Temple unto the Lord, but that the same divine voice which forbad him said to him also, "Nevertheless thou didst well that it was in thine heart." To have a longing for better things and an earnest purpose to do God's will, even though circumstances may thwart and hinder us, is sufficient for God, however inadequate it may seem in our eyes. His love for us is surely very like our own love for our children. We are drawn nearer to them by their weakness, and love them mainly for the promise of what they are to be. Our cherished ambitions on their behalf serve to cover a multitude of present deficiencies, and it is sufficient excuse for their failings if we can say they are but children after all. So to the great Father in heaven our weakness is a claim on His compassion, and our grave shortcomings



vanish in the promise of better things. He judges us in view of what in our best moments we want to be rather than of that which we are.

All instincts immature,  
 All purposes unsure,  
 That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's  
 amount :  
 Thoughts hardly to be packed  
 Into a narrow act,  
 Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;  
 All I could never be,  
 All men ignored in me,  
 This was I worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher  
 shaped.

“Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

3. And so here, too, we have abundant material for our own self-criticism. It is hard to persuade ourselves that we must cast aside our ordinary and everyday standards of judgment. But certainly in the light and teaching of Jesus it has to be done. The world says, Blessed is the man who is successful, who is satisfied with himself, who is always right, of whom all men speak well. The world seeks after an almost animal peace and contentment

with the daily lot. Given a certain decent average of conduct, and a careful observance of religious forms, and it is hard to see what more can be desired. The practice of certain manifest virtues, and abstinence from certain palpable forms of sin, gives a rough-and-ready criterion of conduct, and we ask, as with a show of righteous indignation, who are we that we should go behind these things and pry into the secrets of the heart?

Now, no doubt we have no right at all to judge our neighbours, but we are bound each one of us to judge ourselves. The teaching of Jesus has made it for ever plain that these easy, external standards cannot be sufficient for any of us. To interpret righteousness as mere outward good conduct, conformity to moral law and custom, is Judaism, not Christianity. The invariable product of it is the Pharisee, who can say proudly, "I have kept the Commandments," and can ask, with a smile, "What lack I yet?" But we have not so learned Christ. He has cast the searchlight of a divine ideal into our souls, and we have to judge our-

selves by motives rather than by results, and ask ourselves what we would be, and not merely what we are. The conception of character which Jesus holds up before us we may well consider high and far above our reach, but for that very reason we must cherish and keep it always in our minds. To seek humbly for the truth, to have a passion for holiness and long after perfection is to be blessed indeed. And we must not hide from one another that this involves a ceaseless moral struggle. To be contented with our outward lot is easy enough and right. So far as earthly conditions are concerned,

The mind in its own place and of itself  
Can make a hell of heaven, a heaven of hell.

But to be contented with oneself is a very different thing, and fraught with peril to the soul. And yet how many men and women pass through life easily enough, with scarcely ever an upward yearning, scarcely a twinge of regret that they are what they are! To hunger and thirst for goodness is no extravagant ideal—it is the

very condition of a healthy, moral life. Judged by the men and women round us, we are all decent enough members of society; but judged by the white light of Christ's holiness, where and what are we? Sometimes we may soothe ourselves with the comfortable suggestion that there are no higher heights for us to climb, nothing that we need to be saved from. But in His presence we cast the suggestion away as mere foolishness, and long for the blessing of those that hunger and thirst.

"For they shall be filled." In these words we have at once the reason of their blessing, and a description of it. It consists in getting what they want. They who hunger and thirst after righteousness are of all people the only ones whose hunger is ever stayed, or whose thirst is quenched. We need hardly spend much time in reminding ourselves that none of the pursuits and pleasures of this world can really satisfy our human nature—we are not built that way. We may only half-believe it now, but some day we shall find to our cost that the rich man is never really satisfied

by riches alone, nor the pleasure-seeker by pleasure, nor the merchant by his enterprise, nor the scholar by his studies, nor the labourer by the work of his hands. It is true that we read in novels of men who have no interests or ambitions outside warehouse, or office, or laboratory, or workshop—they have there all their hearts desire. But even if we meet such in real life, we are the first to acknowledge that they are thus easily satisfied at the expense of their manhood. They are drugged, stunted, self-deceived. And even this is only for a short time. The mirage of the desert offers fair promise of cool water to the thirsty traveller, until he reaches it and finds nothing but sand and stones. And so the fairest gifts and the most absorbing interests of earth promise more than they perform, and leave us sometimes with our deepest needs unsatisfied. But the man who sets his ambition on goodness and on God finds in the very search his reward. He has dipped his pitcher into a well that never fails. Character is its own reward, and there is a satisfaction in right



aims and motives quite apart from the effects that follow from them.

But there is something more than this in the promise "They shall be filled." Those who seek for righteousness shall find. Their hope may be long deferred, they may experience untold disappointments; but in the end they will not be put to shame. Their ultimate success will not be due simply to themselves and their own efforts: it is God's peculiar charge, and comes direct from Him. The man who seeks to break out from the prison-house of self and sin has in God, as it were, a friend outside. He is not left to wander a stranger in a strange land, and to withstand alone the temptations and difficulties of his unaccustomed freedom. God gives him the fulfilment of his desire and remains by his side to help him, to strengthen him in all holy impulses, and to intensify the recoil against his former sins. And it is this promise, "They shall be filled," which lifts Christian ethics far out of the category of a mere barren idealism. God says to His children not merely "Be good," but



“Come and I will help you to be good.” He who sees the sparrow fall, and hears the young ravens when they cry, marks also every upward inclination and every sigh for better things in you and me. Through His help the standard of conduct which Christianity sets before us is brought within the range of practical possibilities. No doubt we are often driven to despair; our own efforts are fruitless and futile enough; the things that we would not, those we do, and the things that we would we do not. But we cannot, we must not, reckon without Him. The very intensity of our desire after goodness makes the sting of disappointment more keen. But we need to remember that the very essence of the Gospel message is this: that it has nothing for those who are self-complacent and contented, who have all that heart can desire, and whose eyes stand out with fatness; but that it lavishes all the bounty of God upon the hungry and thirsty, spent and weary souls, feeding them with food convenient for them, and drawing them water from the wells of God’s salvation.

“The whole need not a physician, but the sick.” “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

We have to be content, therefore, simply to receive. All our clever plans and contrivances have to be put upon one side, and we stand as beggars waiting for the mercy and the gift of God. Once a real craving after goodness has awakened within us nothing short of God can satisfy our desires, and of all possible good things “’tis only God who is given away.” The very imperfection of our yearnings is but an occasion for manifesting in a clearer light the riches of His grace. One of the ways in which He answers our desires is by perfecting them, and there is more hope and stimulus in His “one thing thou lackest” than in the frankest commendations of our fellow-men. He shows us how often our noble-seeming aspirations are but a thin veneer over the solid groundwork of earthliness and self, and He wakes us to new and more sincere desires by showing that He loves us in spite of all, and that when we seem to present our worst side

to Him He sees the best. His work is to quicken within us the barest germs of goodness, and to strengthen our dim, dumb yearnings after better things. He shows us how the most rudimentary saint and the most perfect are very near each other when measured by their distance from Him. And so He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax—"For blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

**FOLLOWING CHRIST**

Follow Me.—LUKE v. 27.

## XIV

### FOLLOWING CHRIST

JESUS speaks here as one who is conscious of the right to command. There is an imperious ring about the words, and it is strange that those who heard Him should not have resented it. Yet, so far from that, they seem almost to have welcomed it; they were by no means sorry that He spake not as the scribes. There was an attraction about Him and an air of power which they could not resist; and when Levi the publican forsook all and rose up and followed Him he was but doing as others did—the only possible thing under the circumstances. And by the religious consciousness of men the same right of command is still conceded to Jesus Christ. He is suffered, as it were, to go about seeking disciples, and men are held to be justified in obeying Him first before any other



master. Notwithstanding all the infinite variety of forms which Christianity has assumed, no Christian would shrink from describing Himself as a follower of Christ, and most of them would regard the description as perhaps the fullest and most satisfactory that could be given in a word. It would seem almost superfluous to say anything on the subject. We might very well argue that every one knows what following Christ means, and if the duty of following Him is admitted for all Christians what more can we ask? Yet it is only in a very vague and general way that this is true. Most of us need almost more than anything else to come to close quarters with some of the familiar truths of our religion. We should be very sorry to be told that we are not followers of Christ, and yet it may well be that we have never really asked ourselves what following Him means or ought to mean for us to-day. It is so easy to be satisfied with the mere phrase, and to accept the conventional minimum as all that can be required. For this reason, if for no other, we ought to

ask ourselves still in what sense these words spoken to Levi can be addressed to us—"Follow Me."

First, then, there is a theory of the matter which deserves consideration. Words like these represent, on the part of Jesus, not an isolated impulse, but a fixed policy. His aim was to attach men to Himself, and the bond was to be one of personal devotion and affection. Therefore He said to men, not simply "Keep My words . . . hear My sayings . . . do My commands," but "Come unto Me . . . I am the way . . . believe in Me . . . follow Me." As has been well said, this stress laid upon Himself was with Jesus not egotism but Deity. It was just because He was not as other teachers are, that He did not teach as they do. And the "something more" in Him was Himself. Of course the personality of any teacher is the largest factor in his life and work. What you are is quite as important in helping you to teach men as what you have learned. It is better to know that a boy loves his teacher than to know that the teacher has all the letters of

the alphabet after his name. Now, it was not that Jesus Christ had not a very definite body of doctrine to teach men. The point rather is that He had a very remarkable knowledge of human nature, and He clearly understood that before He could teach men His law or His doctrine He must win them unto Himself. And so the driving force in His religion is to be found not in its abstract truth, but in the Person of its Founder. As He said Himself with sublime assurance : " I, when I shall be lifted up from earth, will draw all men unto Myself." In other words, Christianity is Christ. It is by love and devotion to Him that Christians have been distinguished from the beginning. This has been the source of their courage, of their patience, of their inspiration.

This is the reason why Christianity never grows old. Forms of doctrine and ritual change with every generation, but Jesus remains the same. The picture of Him drawn for humanity in these Gospels was painted in fast colours. It has stood the wear and tear of time, and none of the poor copies of it which men have made

have ever deceived those who can see the original for themselves. Jesus stands for all that is most weighty and permanent in the human character. He holds up before us not the ideal of a race, but of mankind. He was not a perfect Jew, but a perfect man. He corresponds to our dream of all that is most beautiful and desirable in character. It is certain that He has never been surpassed, and we may well be excused for believing that He is unsurpassable. The men with whom He had to do on earth fancied that He was but another rabbi—magnified, indeed, beyond wont, but a rabbi still. They were soon, however, undeceived. They found that He lived in a larger atmosphere than that of legal commands and prohibitions. As to His followers, they were not kept shut up in a school, poring over musty records of the past, and splitting over again thrice-split hairs. They went out with Him into the busy world of men, and learnt to live. They soon came to understand that He Himself was greater than His law, that He was not just another teacher come to tell men what to do, but

that He had come to show them how to do it. With Him religion was no longer a law, but a love, a new passion, a new life. And we have to follow the same Christ. We must beware lest we yield to the temptation to rabbinise His religion—turn it into a mere system made up of shreds and patches of the law—and wear our souls away on mere punctilios. For us Christianity is nothing if it is not Christ. The greatest power we know is the power of personality. And so Jesus Christ appeals to the central principle of our nature, and leads us by the resistless magic of His love out of ourselves into the larger room of a new spiritual life. In Him we are called not to the old treadmill of law and ritual, but to a service which is perfect freedom, to a real divine sonship, and to a labour of love. And it was this among other things that He meant when He said to His first disciples, not only “Hear My words,” but “Follow *Me*.”

2. So much for the mere theory of this injunction. But we must understand also that it has its very practical side. In



spite of all changes in circumstances and conditions, its essential consequences are the same for us that they were for the twelve. And it is by understanding what the command involved for them that we shall best be able to realise what it may involve for us.

For one thing these men became pupils of Jesus Christ. Like all Oriental teachers, His first object was to found a school. Wiser in their generation than we, the rabbis were not content to write books for posterity—they preferred to utter their teaching to living phonographs, that by the mouths and in the lives of men others might learn what they were and what they taught. And Jesus called men to follow Him that He might do the same with them. For three years they went about with Him, and lived with Him in closest intimacy. They listened to His public discourses and to His table-talk. They watched His actions and studied the methods of His work. Though they were men of simple, rugged natures He was able to mould them according to His desire; and though they all developed in very different ways, and none



of them reached the ideal He set before them, they all ever afterwards bore branded on their minds and characters the marks of the Lord Jesus.

So for us too discipleship means pupilage. If you call yourself a Christian this means that you have entered the school of Jesus Christ—you cannot escape the obligation of taking His yoke upon you and learning of Him. It is quite true, of course, that this does not sum up the whole of the relationship between you. You were attracted not first of all by the teacher in Jesus, but by the Saviour. He gives to you something more than a new wisdom; He gives a new life. But this life has to be lived. Jesus has not done with a man when He has given him forgiveness and a blessed assurance of salvation from sin. This He can do, and does, but it is only the first step in a long process, and the next is that the man so saved goes to school with His Saviour. For he is saved not for himself alone. It is a most grievous perversion of the work of Jesus to make it begin and end in the soul of the individual.

He takes far wider views than this; in His eyes every saved man becomes a possible saviour of others. In His work there is a deep moral purpose which concerns not merely the individual but the community. And it was this which distinguished His doctrine from that of the recognised teachers of the day. In the teaching of Jesus were life, elasticity, poetry. Its aim was to make men. The teaching of the rabbis was dead, wooden, and could only make pedants. What Jesus lays stress upon are such points as these: "the Fatherhood of God over the human family; His perpetual and beneficent providence for all His children; the excellence of simple trust in God over the earthly care of this world; the obligation of God's children to be like their Father in Heaven; the paramount importance of true and holy motives; the worthlessness of a merely formal righteousness; the inestimable value of heart-righteousness; forgiveness of sins dependent on our forgiving our neighbours; the fulfilling of the law of love; and the play of the tender and passive virtues."

These are the points which Jesus emphasised, and it is by their acceptance of this teaching in the fullest sense that His followers are known. It is not a question of belief in a metaphysical creed, or of minute observance of a moral and ceremonial law—it is rather the adoption of a certain spirit, temper, and mind. And in this respect surely the discipleship of most of us leaves much to be desired. It is so much easier to observe the letter than to live by the spirit, and the temptation to turn the free, frank doctrine of Jesus into a thing of fixed formularies is one to which we all succumb. And just as He was always present in His lifetime with His disciples to guide, correct, and stimulate them, so we must learn to dwell ever with Him, that His ideal and example may check our vagaries and lead us nearer the truth.

There are two points at least which specially distinguished the teaching of Jesus, which His followers need specially to mark. One is His relentless demand for absolute sincerity of thought, word, and deed. In the Christian life there is no room for

double dealing of any kind. Its supreme qualification is the pure heart and single eye, a hatred of hypocrisy, and a deep disdain for all outward show and observance that does not accurately correspond with inward feeling and aim. And another point is Christ's exaltation of the passive virtues of meekness and humility. "The Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves." This ideal is neither easy nor popular, and yet it is certain that without some strenuous and habitual effort to attain it, there can be no true following of Jesus Christ.

3. But, once again, to follow Christ is not only to become His pupil in the realm of moral character and spiritual life; it is also to be His servant, or, as St. Paul loved to phrase it, His slave. The first disciples were servants as well as pupils. They were called to follow their Master that they might help Him—to teach, preach, and heal in His name, and after that He should have returned to His Father to carry on His work. And Christians to-day

do not shrink from accepting this description as true of themselves. They admit that they are to be in the world as Christ was ; that they have received a solemn charge of service at His hands ; and that if they are to be true followers of Him they must be ministers and slaves. This means that they will not shrink from the most unreserved surrender of themselves to the Master's will. In spite of the clashing claims, duties and interests of this present life, they will keep this high aim steadily before them, and be conspicuous amid the eddying crowd as those that have a dominant and overmastering purpose in their lives. They will realise that for the Christian his religion is not a matter of being merely, but of doing—that they are themselves called of God to a certain definite task, and that they have to accomplish their tale while it is called to-day. The work of Jesus Christ with His followers is not merely their moral and spiritual up-building—it is the making of them fellow-labourers with God. And in so serving Him they come to serve man. Their worship of Him



is not to evaporate in ecstasies of praise, or even in empty and often selfish imitation of Christ. He has left with His followers the vast mass of men and women made in His image, and these they have to minister unto in His stead.

Here, again, is a duty required and accepted by most Christian people, though it is to be feared often in a very perfunctory and formal way. A Christian ministry has come to have a very cut-and-dried meaning of its own, and the doing of certain obvious duties of friendliness and brotherly kindness is held to satisfy all the requirements of the new law. But we must not forget that the new law is one of love. And it is not until we can be said to love men as Christ did that we can serve them aright. What we want is not the discharge of certain conventional duties towards our neighbour, but the spirit of service—to love our neighbours as ourselves. We all admit that Jesus loved men if ever any one did. But His love was not mere pity : it sprang out of His just and tender estimate of what men were and were worth. We can all of us



pity the miserable ; but our pity is often only a kind of reversed selfishness, springing from the uneasy feeling which the woes of others are apt to excite in our breasts. But the love of Jesus was something of a very different kind from this. He yearned over men with a strange and wonderful compassion. He saw them in the light of that Sonship of God which they had forfeited, and in the light of that Divine Image which they had marred. To Him they were what lost sheep were to the good shepherd, and the contrast between what they were and what they might be constrained Him to lavish upon them all His care. So the task which He left to His followers was the saving of lost men. He took the love which they bore Him, and sought to transfer it to those for whom He died. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these ye have done it unto Me." And we are no true followers of Him until there has been kindled in our breasts a love for men like His. We have to see them with His eyes, to understand as He did the tragedy of their sin, to read

His meaning into that terrible word "lost," to spend ourselves for others with the self-abandonment which He showed. Such uncalculating love is the rarest and most beautiful of the gifts of God. We need it in order to transfigure our easy-going and self-centred lives. Without this wedding garment of love we shall never be accepted as His followers, and our souls will stand naked and ashamed before the Son of Man.

Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul,  
May keep the path but will not reach the goal;  
While he who walks in love may wander far,  
Yet God will bring him where the blessed are.

4. Once more, there is a sense in which Jesus Christ is a very exacting Master. He can brook no rival in the hearts of His followers; He must reign there supreme. And so we read that Levi, when he was called, "rose up and left all and followed Him." And this is quite in the natural order of things. A service and a devotion so engrossing as that of the Christian to Christ must naturally mean a good deal of self-denial. To turn our faces to Him is to turn our backs on all else. He must

come first. True, He does not call all His followers to abandon their business and homes and become missionaries of His word. Matthew might have continued a publican as Zacchæus did, but he would have been a very different publican from what he was before. The aim and standpoint of his life were now altered, and he could no longer seek simply his own interests and be careless of the means he used to attain them. So we may continue our work in this world after we have listened to the call of Jesus Christ, but if we are true followers of Him it will be with a difference. We shall have broken absolutely with the accepted ideas and aims of this present world ; we shall make it clear by our whole action and demeanour that we use all that it can give us or do for us simply as the means to a higher end.

Quite apart from our personal devotion to the will of Jesus Christ, He represents for us things which are unseen and eternal, on which our closest affections are set. In Him we find our perspective wholly changed. He calls us to self-sacrifice, but it is for a

clear and high object—we give up the less for the greater, the meaner for the more precious. Beside the aim and interests of that Kingdom of Heaven whereof He opens the doors, all that men count most valuable in the kingdoms of this world becomes comparatively insignificant and poor. We are content to do our work in this life well, and to throw into it no little energy and zeal; but we do it on the distinct understanding that we are stewards, working not for ourselves, but for our chosen Master and Lord. It is from Him that we obtain our strength to endure and to work well. We journey ever as seeing Him who is invisible, and with the light of another world in our eyes. It is not that He condemns absolutely the flesh, the eye, and life, but the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It is the sole and exclusive absorption in these things that destroys our true manhood, and sets us necessarily at variance with God. What Christ does for us is to create a deep and abiding affection for the things that are unseen, eternal, and true, and so He lessens

our attachment to what is outward, transitory, and unreal.

We can afford to let these things take quite a secondary place in our regard, because we are devoted to higher interests and must be about our Master's business. And we must remember that Jesus altogether discourages attempts at compromise. The language He used about the demands of discipleship was as strong as it could well be, and has often seemed offensive to our weak faith. He can only take the first place in the affection of His followers, and nothing must come between. In the long run no man can serve two masters, nor can we halt for long between two opinions. "He that is not with us is against us." A man is either living consciously and intelligently for the higher things of the spiritual life, or else he is living for himself and for the world. His eyes are either turned heavenwards, or else are fixed on earth at his feet. And so we need not wonder that the way we have to tread in following Jesus Christ is the way of the Cross. No man who has high ambition before him



but has to deny himself in order to attain it. And the Christian's ambition is of the highest. But Jesus does not teach mere self-denial; He asks for self-sacrifice. The difference is that self-denial has no office outside the individual—self-sacrifice is the result of a wide and world-embracing love. As the athlete strips himself of all impediments that he may run a race well, so the Christian has to cast off every aim and pleasure and desire that would hinder his following of Christ.













